Early Yogācāra and its Relation to Nāgārjuna's Madhyamaka: Change and Continuity in the History of Mahāyāna Buddhist Thought

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Elena France Hanson

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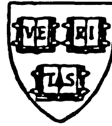
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Early Yogācāra and its Relation to Nāgārjuna's Madhyamaka: Change and Continuity in the History of Mahāyāna Buddhist Thought

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Abstract

Early Yogācāra and its Relation to Nāgārjuna's Madhyamaka:
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by
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Professor Charles Hallisey, advisor

This dissertation examines the relation between the Madhyamaka and Yogācāra schools of Buddhism, focusing on the Yogācāra perspective. It reevaluates the opinion, generally accepted among modern scholars, that the Madhyamaka and Yogācāra schools constitute divergent and radically opposed movements within the Buddhist Tradition. To address this issue, the dissertation distinguishes between two separate questions. The first question is whether the early Yogācāra writers were actively refuting what they perceived to be a distinct religious school within the Buddhist tradition. This question is doxographical, concerning itself with how the authors of certain Yogācāra texts saw their own theories in relation to other Buddhist teachings. The second question is whether the philosophical doctrines of the early Yogācāra writers are inconsistent with the foundational Madhyamaka writings. This question is one of comparative religious philosophies.

In addressing the doxographical question, the dissertation examines the biographical sources pertaining to the early Yogācāra writers, Asaṅga and Vasubandhu, as well as the philosophical writings which are attributed to them. None of these sources give any indication that the early Yogācāra

writers were in dialogue with the Madhyamaka as a distinct philosophical school. In addressing the philosophical question regarding the relation between the Madhyamaka and Yogācāra, the dissertation examines two doctrines which are closely associated with the two schools respectively: the two truths and the three natures. Rather than negating or correcting the Madhyamaka notion of two truths, the Yogācāra doctrine of three natures is shown to be in accord with and complementary to the two truths.

The dissertation concludes that the view commonly held in Western scholarship that the Yogācāra school arose in opposition to the Madhyamaka school rests upon a failure to make a clear distinction between the early and later phases of the two schools. In drawing from the later commentarial traditions of both schools, in which debates between the Madhyamaka and Yogācāra schools had arisen, modern scholars have transposed onto early Madhyamaka and Yogācāra writings a philosophical stance and a doxographical self-understanding which does not apply.

Contents

To my husband, Mark

Contents (cont.)

Acknowledgments

With this dissertation I have attempted to bring to fruition a set of ideas planted in my mind by Professor Masatoshi Nagatomi. Those who know Mas know that has often planted and carefully tended such orchards. At the conference in his honor that I had the privilege to organize on the occasion of his retirement, it was very moving to see how many people in a variety of disciplines feel deeply indebted to Mas for his guidance and encouragement. I am proud to be in such company.

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I would also like to thank the other members of my dissertation committee, Professor John Makransky, whose deep understanding of the Indo-Tibetan philosophical literature served as a valuable resource that I turned to again and again, and Professor John Carman who provided extremely valuable guidance and encouragement throughout my graduate studies at Harvard.

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Abbreviations

Primary Sources

AA Abhisamayālamkāra
AKS Aksayamatinirdeśasūtra
AK Abhidharmakośa
APP Astasāhasrikā-prajñāpāramitā-sūtra
AS Abhidharmasamuccaya
ASA Abhisamayālamkāra
BBh Bodhisattvabhūmi
BV Bodhicittavivarana
CS Catuhśataka
D Sde dge (Derge) number, from the Ōtani University edition of the sems tsam section of the Tibetan Tripitaka Tokyo: 1981.
DB Daśabhūmikasūtra
DDV Dharmadharmatāvibhāga
K Korean Buddhist Canon Number
KSP Karmasiddhiprakarana
LA Laṅkāvatārasūtra
MA Madhyamakāvatāra
MMK Mūlamadhyamakakārikā
MS Mahāyānasamgraha
MSA Mahāyānasūtrālamkāra
MV Madhyāntavibhāga
MVy Mahāvyutpatti
P Peking edition of the Tibetan Tripiṭaka. Suzuki, Daisetz T., ed. Tokyo: Suzuki Research Foundation, 1955 sq.
PP Prasannapadā
PSP Pañcaskandhaprakarana
PSV Pratītyasamutpāda (-ādivibhaṅganirdeśa-) vyākhya
SN Samdhinirmocanasūtra
SP Saddharmapundarīka
T Taisho edition of the Tripiṭaka. Taishō Shinshū Daizōkyō. Tokyo: Society for the Publication of the Taisho Edition of the Tripiṭaka, 1924-34.
Tg bsTan 'gyur
To Tohoku Catalogue of the Tibetan bla' 'gyur and bsTan 'gyur
Trim Trimśikā

Abbreviations (cont.)

TSN Trisvabhāvanirdeśa
Vad Vādavidhi
Vig Vigrahavyāvartanī
Vim Vimśatikā
VS Viniścayasamgrahanī
VV Vigrahavyāvartanī
Vy Vyākhyāyukti
YBh Yogācārabhūmi

Journals

BEFEO Bulletin de l'École Française d'Extrême-Orient
EB Eastern Buddhist
IA Indian Antiquary
IHQ Indian Historical Quarterly
IIJ Indo-Iranian Journal
JA Journal Asiatique
JAAR Journal of the American Academy of Religion
JAOS Journal of the American Oriental Society
JBRS Journal of the Bihar and Orissa Research Society
JIBS Journal of Indian and Buddhist Studies
JIABS Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies
JIP Journal of Indian Philosophy
JRAS Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society
MCB Melanges Chinois et Bouddhiques
PEW Philosophy East and West
RO Rocznik Orientalistyczny
WZKSO Wiener Zeitschrift fur die Kunde Sud-und Ostasiens
ZII Zeitschrift fur Indologie und Iranistik, herausg. von der Deutschen Morgenlandischen Gesellschaft
ZDMG Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft

Chapter 1
Introduction

I. Statement of the Topic

A distinction is conventionally made between two major religious schools within Mahāyāna Buddhism --the Madhyamaka and the Yogācāra. This distinction is recognized both by scholars of Buddhism and by members of the Buddhist tradition. Nāgārjuna, the earliest figure associated with the Madhyamaka school, is believed to have lived in the South of India *circa* 150-250 CE. Nāgārjuna's counterparts in the Yogācāra school--Maitreya, Asaṅga and Vasubandhu-- lived in the North of India some time between the fourth and fifth centuries CE.[1] The philosophical writings attributed to these four figures form the textual foundation for the vast body of original and commentarial literature of the Madhyamaka and Yogācāra schools.

Modern scholars of Buddhism have tended to view the Madhyamaka and Yogācāra schools as divergent and radically opposed movements. Edward Conze, for example, states that "these two schools were engaged in constant disputes and the works of one have no authority for the other."[2] Some scholars, however, have challenged this view. Gadjin Nagao, one of

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1 For a detailed discussion regarding the dates of Asaṅga and Vasubandhu, see Chap. 2. Sect IV. For a brief discussion regarding the dates of Nāgārjuna, see n. 98.

2 Conze, Edward. Thirty Years of Buddhist Studies, 1934-1972. San Francisco: Wheelwright Press, 1980, p. 102.

the few scholars to investigate closely the relation between the two schools, argues that the Yogācāra school did not reject Madhyamaka doctrine, and that the two schools should be viewed as complementary rather than contradictory.[3] He states, "The gap between the Mādhyamika and the Vijñānavāda [i.e., Yogācāra] traditions must be bridged, because the Mādhyamikas and the Vijñānavādins were not, from the beginning, two antithetical schools, as is usually assumed."[4]

This dissertation will examine the relation between the Madhyamaka and Yogācāra schools of Buddhism, focusing on the Yogācāra perspective, and using traditional Buddhist histories and biographies, and primary philosophical texts as its sources. Although the Yogācāra represents an important development in Mahāyāna thought, relatively little of western Buddhist scholarship has been devoted to its study. This is particularly true with regard to the close study of primary textual materials. In focusing on the Yogācāra perspective, I hope to work toward filling this gap in the study of the Buddhist tradition. Two central questions will shape this investigation. The first question is whether the early Yogācāra writers were

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3 See especially Nagao, Gadjin. Mādhyamika and Yogācāra: A Study of Mahāyāna Philosophies. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1991.

This volume contains a collection of essays by Nagao dating from to 1941 until 1986. Nagao is one of the only modern scholars to investigate the relation between the Madhyamaka and Yogācāra schools in any depth. He is also one of the first modern scholars to argue for the compatibility of the two schools.

The only other modern scholars who have argued at any length for the compatibility of the Madhyamaka and Yogācāra schools are Ian Charles Harris, in The Continuity of Madhyamaka and Yogācāra in Indian Mahāyāna Buddhism. New York: E.J. Brill, 1991; and Richard King, in "Early Yogācāra and its Relationship with the Madhyamaka School." PEW 44:4 (1994).

4 "President's Address" to the First Conference of the International Association of Buddhist Studies (New York, September 15, 1978). JIABS 1:2 (1978) p. 83.

actively refuting what they perceived to be a distinct religious school within the Buddhist tradition. This question is one of institutional history; it asks where the early Yogācāra writers placed themselves and their theories in relation to other Buddhist groups and teachings. The second question is whether the philosophical doctrines of the early Yogācāra writers are inconsistent with the foundational Madhyamaka writings. This question is one of comparative religious philosophies; it asks how the early Yogācāra writings can be understood in relation to the writings of Nāgārjuna..

For each of these two questions, this dissertation will present both weakly-stated and strongly-stated versions of the same two-part thesis. The weakly-stated version, in two parts, is as follows: (i) there is no conclusive evidence that the early Yogācāra authors were writing in opposition to the Madhyamaka school, and (ii) the philosophical doctrines which the early Yogācāra authors present can be interpreted as being compatible and continuous with the writings of Nāgārjuna. The strongly-stated version of this thesis, in two parts, is as follows: (I) the early Yogācāra writers were not writing in opposition to the Madhyamaka school, and (II) the philosophical doctrines which the early Yogācāra authors present are compatible and continuous with the writings of Nāgārjuna. The aim of this dissertation is to prove the weakly-stated version of the thesis, and to support as firmly as possible the strongly-stated version.

II. Names for the Yogācāra

The Yogācāra school is also known as the Cittamātra, Vijñaptimātra, and Vijñānavāda. Each of these cognomens, together with its literal meaning, carries with it certain associations which both reflect and influence

how scholars view this school. It is therefore worth examining the implications of these names, and how they have been used. Perhaps the most important point regarding all these names is that none of them, in their earliest usage, denoted an institutional affiliation.

The name Cittamātra means literally mind-only, and Vijñaptimātra has variously been translated as "representation-only," "ideation-only," and "perception-only."[5] The epithets Cittamātra and Vijñaptimātra are associated with the Yogācāra school based on the assertion, found especially in later Yogācāra texts, that the entire world is nothing but mind, or representation. The expressions *vijñaptimātra* and *cittamātra* are not used frequently, however, in the early Yogācāra writings. In Asaṅga's lengthy Yogācārabhūmi, they are barely used at all. As Lambert Schmithausen remarks:

> In this text, as far as I can see, the idealistic-spiritualistic philosophy of later Yogācāras and its characteristic terms, *vijñaptimātra* and *cittamātra*, are not yet traceable. I found only one passage in which the text asserts that only the mind (*cittamātra*) exists in reality. But it is an opponent who is speaking in this passage, and moreover the statement is not, as usually, directed against the existence of real objects outside the mind but merely against the opinion that, besides the mind, we have to accept the existence of emotional and volitional mental factors.[6]

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5 From Hall, Bruce Cameron. "The Meaning of *Vijñapti* in Vasubandhu's Concept of Mind." JIABS 9:1 (1986) pp. 7-8.

6 Schmithausen, Lambert. "On the Problem of the Relation of Spiritual Practice and Philosophical Theory in Buddhism," in German Scholars on India. Contributions to Indian Studies, vol. 2. Bombay: Nachiketa Publications, 1976, p. 238.

The terms *cittamātra* and *vijñaptimātra*, although not commonly found in the early Yogācāra literature, are not altogether absent therefrom. They appear, for example, in the Samdhinirmocana and Mahāyānasamgraha.[7] However, unlike in later Yogācāra writings, the terms are not used in the presentation of a systematic ontological position. Instead, their use is very close to that found in earlier texts which are not associated specifically with the Yogācāra school. The declaration found in Asaṅga's Mahāyānasamgraha that the entire world is nothing but mind is an exact quotation from these earlier Buddhist texts.[8] The first known appearance of this claim is in the Bhadrapāla-sūtra, a Buddhist meditation manual. The expression *cittamātra* is used here in the context of meditative practice, and does not have any association with a philosophical movement.

The same is true for the usage of the terms *cittamātra* and *vijñaptimātra* in the early Yogācāra literature. In the Samdhinirmocana, the term *vijñaptimātra* appears in the eighth chapter, when the Bodhisattva

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[7] For the use of the terms *cittamātra* and *vijñaptimātra* in the Samdhinirmocana, see especially Chap. 8. (See John Powers' edition and translation of the Samdhinirmocana in Wisdom of Buddha: The Samdhinirmocana Mahāyāna Sūtra: Essential Questions and Direct Answers for Realizing Enlightenment. Berkeley: Dharma Publishing, 1994.)

For the use of the terms *cittamātra* and *vijñaptimātra* in the Mahāyānasamgraha, see, for example, 2:7. (See Étienne Lamotte's edition and translation of the Mahāyānasamgraha in La Somme du Grand Véhicule d'Asaṅga (Mahāyānasamgraha). 2 vols. Louvain: Université de Louvain, 1973.

[8] The phrase *cittamātram idaṃ yad idaṃ traidhātukam* (The three realms [of desire, corporeal matter and immateriality] are nothing but mind) is found in the sixth chapter of the Daśabhūmikasūtra (ed. by Johannes Rahder, in Daśabhūmikasūtra et Bodhi-sattva-bhūmi. Paris: Paul Geuthner, 1926, 49 E.), and in the Bhadrapāla-sūtra. For a further discussion of the Bhadrapāla-sūtra, and the use of the term *cittamātra* therein, see Schmithausen (1976) 246ff.

Maitreya asks the Buddha whether the images which are perceived during *samādhi* are different from the mind or not. The Buddha replies that they are not different from the mind and are merely cognition (*vijñaptimātra*).[9] The ensuing discussion between Maitreya and the Buddha is clearly focused on the topic of meditative technique in the Mahāyāna, and specifically on how to develop *śamatha* and *vipaśyanā*, the two bases of Buddhist meditation. The chapter, which begins with Maitreya asking the Buddha about the Mahāyāna practice of *śamatha* and *vipaśyanā*,[10] ends with the following declaration by the Buddha: "Maitreya, this is the teaching of the definitive meaning of yoga. Apprehend it as 'the teaching of the definitive meaning of yoga.'"[11] Likewise, in the Mahāyānasamgraha, the terms *cittamātra* and *vijñaptimātra* are used in the context of a discussion regarding meditation. The terms *cittamātra* and *vijñaptimātra* do not yet

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9 SN pp. 155ff.

Throughout the dissertation, citations from the SN are taken from John Powers' edition of the text in Wisdom of Buddha: The Samdhinirmocana Sūtra. Berkeley: Dharma Publishing, 1995. See also Lamotte's edition and translation, listed in the bibliography.

10 SN pp. 148-149.

11 SN pp. 216-217.

bcom ldan 'das kyis de la bka' stsal pa/ byams pa 'di ni rnal 'byor nges pa'i don bstan pa yin te/ rnal 'byor nges pa'i don bstan pa zhes bya bar gzung zhig/ rnal 'byor nges pa'i don bstan pa 'di bshad pa na srog chags drug 'bum ni bla na med pa yang dag par rdsogs pa'i byang chub tu sems skyes so//

Throughout the dissertation, all translations from Sanskrit and Tibetan materials are my own, unless otherwise indicated. My own translations are, of course, indebted to earlier translations by western scholars, listed in the bibliography below. For important technical terms, or terms which do not have an exact English equivalent, I have either used the original term by itself, or included it parenthetically alongside its English translation. Although for the most part, my translations adhere as closely as possible to the original language, at certain times, for the purposes of clarity and readability, I keep from a strict literal translation of the text.

appear to be used systematically as an ontological stance. Nor, by any means, do they constitute a designation for a school of thought.[12]

The other name for the Yogācāra, Vijñānavāda, means, "the doctrine that consciousness exists." This epithet is used in later literature to refer to the Yogācāra school.[13] The term Vijñānavāda is particularly problematic in referring to the early Yogācāra writings. It never appears in this body of literature, and seems to apply specifically to the doctrinal position of a later

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12 A variant of this phrase also appears in the opening verses of Vasubandhu's Vimśatikā Vasubandhu asserts: *mahāyāne traidhātukam vijñaptimātraṃ vyavasthāpyate*. This phrase has been translated as follows: "In the Mahāyāna it is established that the three worlds are representation-only." (E.g., Clarence H. Hamilton, Wei Shih Er Shih Lun: The Treatise in Twenty Stanzas on Representation-only, by Vasubandhu. American Oriental Series, 13. New Haven: American Oriental Society, 1938, p. 19.)

Against this translation, Thomas Kochumuttom claims that *vijñaptimātra* is not meant as a description of the absolute but a description of our experience of reality. He argues that *traidhātukam* is in adjectival form, and thus qualifies a noun which the reader is expected to supply. It is not, he says, a substantive meaning "the three worlds." Kochumuttom takes the understood referent to be *citta-caitta* (mind and mental factors). Thus, a translation of Vasubandhu's verse, according to Kochumuttom, should read, "It is established in the Mahāyāna that [the mind and mental factors belonging to] the three worlds are representation only" (Kochumuttom, Thomas A. A Buddhist Doctrine of Experience: A New Translation and Interpretation of the Works of Vasubandhu the Yogācārin. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1982 (reprinted 1989) pp. 165-166).

Paul Griffiths agrees that *traidhātukam* is an adjective, but argues that it qualifies the term world (*loka*), not *citta-caitta* (Griffiths, Paul J. On Being Mindless: Buddhist Meditation And the Mind-Body Problem. La Salle: Open Court, 1986 (reprinted 1987) p. 176).

See also Janice Dean Willis in On Knowing Reality: The Tattvārtha Chapter of Asaṅga's Bodhisattvabhūmi. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1982, pp. 24-31.

13 Candrakīrti refers to the rival school of the Madhyamaka as Vijñānavāda (Tib. *sems tsam pa*). See for e.g., Madhyamakāvatāra, p. 135, edited by Louis de La Vallée Poussin. Bibliotheca Buddhica vol. 9, Osanbrük: 1970.

The school is also referred to by this name in Mahāvyutpatti (MVy) 5145 Sakaki, ed. 2 vols. Kyoto: 1916, 1928.

development within Yogācāra thought. Roughly two centuries after the time of Asaṅga and Vasubandhu, there developed two clearly delineated streams of Yogācāra thought. The term Vijñānavāda is used in Buddhist literature primarily in reference to the lineage of the Yogācāra propagated by Dharmapāla, who upheld the view that the external world was merely a transformation of an ultimately real subjective consciousness.[14] According to Yoshifumi Ueda, this lineage constituted a significant divergence from the thought of the early Yogācāra. Thus it is misleading to apply the term Vijñānavāda, and the ontological stance it denotes, to the early phases of the Yogācāra.

Literally, Yogācāra means "practice of spiritual discipline." Although the term *yogācāra* certainly did come to designate a distinct group within the Mahāyāna, it is far from certain that it held such a meaning for the early Yogācāra writers. In its early usage, the term *yogācāra* referred simply in its literal sense to the practice of yoga: it did not connote any doctrinal or scholastic affiliation. For example, when Aśvaghoṣa, writing the in 2nd century CE, recommends *yogācāra*, he is promoting the practice of yoga, rather than a philosophical school.[15] Of particular interest are similar uses of the term Yogācāra by Āryadeva, the primary disciple of Nāgārjuna. In the Tibetan Bstan 'gyur, the full title of Āryadeva's Catuḥśataka is recorded as the Bodhisattva-yogacaryā-śāstra-catuḥśataka-kārikā. The Sanskrit fragments of this text also contain the term *yogāçāra*. In the chapter colophons of the Catuḥśataka, Āryadeva refers to the follower of

[14] For a discussion regarding the differences between the two streams of Yogācāra thought, see Ueda, Yoshifumi. "Two Main Streams of Thought in Yogācāra Philosophy." PEW 17:1-4 (1967) 155-165.

[15] Saundarananda-kāvya 14:18 and 20:68.

Madhyamaka as a Yogācārin.[16] On the basis of this evidence, it would appear that the appellation Yogācāra as it was being used at the time when Asaṅga was writing, designated Buddhist practitioners in general and did not refer to a separate Buddhist school.[17] Even Bhāvaviveka, a great opponent of the Yogācāra, sometimes uses the term Yogācāra to refer to a yogin in general, and not a member of a philosophical school.[18]

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16 David Seyfort Ruegg remarks:

"The use of this term is remarkable since it came to be usually associated with the school of the Yogācārins/Vijñānavādins established subsequently by Asaṅga and appears already in the title of one of their basic sources, the Yogācārabhūmi (known in the bsTan 'gyur version as Yogacaryābhūmi). Some kind of close relation may well have existed between Āryadeva and early masters of the Yogācārin school; for not only has the Hastavālaprakarana, a work by Dignāga, been ascribed to him by an Indo-Tibetan tradition but, as already mentioned, the Yogācārin Dharmapāla wrote a commentary on the second portion of the CŚ as late as the sixth century. Yet the reference in the title of the CŚ to *yogācāra/yogacaryā* could hardly have been intended to express any specific connexion between it and the school of the Yogācārins/Vijñānavādins; and it appears that the word was then still being used as a general term to denote practicers of the Buddhist spiritual and intellectual disciplines without reference to a particular philosophical school" (Ruegg, David Seyfort. The Literature of the Madhyamaka School of Philosophy in India. vol. 7, Fascicle 1 of A History of Indian Literature, J. Gonda, ed. Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1981, p. 52).

17 It should be noted that the term Yogācāra is used in Vasubandhu's Abhidharmakośabhāṣya (AKbh) to designate a clearly defined philosophical school. In AKbh 19:5, for example, the Yogācārins are attributed with a particular interpretation of a passage of a Buddhist *sūtra* which speaks of three types of *rūpa* (form). The implication of this reference depends upon whether we accept Erich Frauwallner and Lambert Schmithausen's proposal that the author of the AK lived from 400-480 CE, and was different from the earlier Vasubandhu who is associated with the Yogācāra. (For a discussion regarding the possible existence of two Vasubandhus, see Chap. 2, Sect. III.)

18 See Ruegg (1981) p. 63, n. 199. This is not to say that Bhāvaviveka does not use "Yogācāra" as a doxographical term. Indeed, according to Ronald Davidson, Bhāvaviveka is the first to use the term Yogācāra to refer to a school of thought. See Ronald Mark Davidson, Buddhist Systems of Transformation: Āśraya-parivṛtti/parāvṛtti among the Yogācāra. Unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation,

The association of the name Yogācāra with the works of Maitreya, Asaṅga and Vasubandhu is derived in large part from the title of a voluminous work attributed to Asaṅga, the Yogācārabhūmi (Stages of Spiritual Discipline). The use of the term Yogācāra in this title does not appear to connote a separate movement within the Buddhist Tradition. Indeed, there were a number of texts by this name that have no association with the Yogācāra school whatsoever. A text by the title Yogācārabhūmi was authored by Saṅgharakṣa, and translated into Chinese at the end of the second century CE. In this text, Saṅgharakṣa mentions two earlier works bearing the same name. One, belonging to the Hīnayāna, was written by Buddhasena, and translated into Chinese around the year 413 CE. The other, a small yoga manual of the Mahāyāna, was translated into Chinese *circa* 300 CE.[19] Finally, there exists a Theravādin Sinhalese text, entitled The Yogācāra's Manual.[20]

University of California, Berkeley, 1985.

19 See Demiéville, Paul. "Le Yogācārabhūmi de Saṅgharakṣa" Bulletin de l'École Française d'Extrême-Orient, 44 (1954) pp. 362-363 and 395-396.

20 Edited by Thomas William Rhys Davids in The Yogāvacara's Manual of Indian Mysticism as Practiced by Buddhists. London: The Pali Text Society, 1896 (reprinted 1981); and translated by F. L. Woodward in Manual of a Mystic: Being a Translation from the Pali and Sinhalese Work Entitled The Yogachara's Manual. London: Pali Text Society, 1916. On the connection of this text to Southeast Asian Traditions, see François Bizot, Le Figuier à Cinq Branches in Recherches sur le Bouddhism Khmer. Paris: École Française d'Extrême-Orient, 1976.

Jonathan Silk discusses the meaning of the term Yogācāra in early Buddhism and Mahāyāna scriptures in his "The *yogācāra bhikṣu*" in Beiju: Buddhist Studies in Honor of Professor Gadjin M. Nagao. J. Silk, ed. Studies in the Buddhist Traditions 3. University of Hawaii Press, 1997. See also Silk's subsequent article, "Further Remarks on the *yogācāra bhikṣu*" in Dharmadūta: Mélanges Offerts au Vénérable Thích Huyên-Vi à l'Occasion de son Soixante-dixième Anniversaire. Bikkhu Pāsādika and Bikkhu Tampalawela

I have chosen to use the name Yogācāra for two reasons: first, because it is the earliest designation to appear within the body of texts considered to belong to this school; second, because its literal meaning, practitioner of yoga, is not bound to a particular doctrine, or philosophical movement, and can be taken to refer to Buddhists in general, rather than to a specific Buddhist school. Of all the terms, it is doxographically the most neutral.

III. Modern Scholarly Views Regarding the Relation Between the Madhyamaka and Yogācāra Schools

The Madhyamaka and Yogācāra schools are generally viewed by modern scholars as movements within Mahāyāna Buddhism which are distinct, and philosophically incompatible. M. David Eckel, for example, states that "beneath the irenic mixture of images in the sources of the two schools lie fundamentally different interpretations of the key concepts of Mahāyāna thought."[21] Elvin W. Jones divides Buddhist thought into three fundamental ontological positions: that all existents are reals, that no existents are reals, and that some existents are reals whereas some are unreals. The first position he attributes to Vaibhāṣikas and Sautrāntikas, the second to Mādhyamikas, and the third to Yogācārins.[22] Jones characterizes

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Dhammaratana, eds. Paris: Éditions You Feng 233-250.

[21] Eckel, Malcolm David. "Bhāvaviveka's Critique of Yogācāra Philosophy in Chapter XXV of the Prajñāpradīpa," in Miscellanea Buddhica. Indiske Studier 5. Christian Lindtner, ed. Copenhagen: 1985, p. 25.

[22] Jones, Elvin W. "Buddhist Theories of Existents: The Systems of Two Truths" in Mahāyāna Buddhist Meditation: Theory and Practice. Minoru Kiyota, ed. Honolulu: The University Press of Hawaii, 1978, p. 19.

Jones' model seems to be oversimplistic. As I shall discuss in Chapter 6, the Yogācāra view is that all things are neither real nor unreal, or both real and

the philosophy of the Yogācāra as not only different from the Madhyamaka, but as a response and attempt to correct it. He asserts that for some Buddhists, "Nāgārjuna's pure nominalism remained too extreme in the direction of nihilism.... This last doctrinal synthesis of Indian Buddhism into a system of idealist non-dualism was primarily the work of Asaṅga, who was later joined by his brother, Vasubandhu."[23]

The depiction of the Yogācāra as a movement which arose as a conscious response to the Madhyamaka is common throughout modern scholarship of Buddhism. T.R.V. Murti, for example, states that "The Idealism of the *Yogācāra (Vijñānavāda)* school has to be understood as a significant modification of the *Mādhyamika śūnyatā* on a constructive basis."[24] K.N. Chatterjee paints the same picture even more dramatically, stating that the Yogācāra set out to avoid the nihilistic tendency of Madhyamaka by asserting that everything exists in mind only (*citta-mātra*).[25] Likewise, Stcherbatsky writes in the introduction to his translation of a central Yogācāra text, the Madhyāntavibhāga,

> The whole chapter V of the first part of the treatise is devoted to the elucidation of the Yogācāra conception of this term [śūnyatā] as contrasted with the Mādhyamika view of it. It is there most clearly and emphatically stated that, for the

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unreal. This view does not diverge from that of Nāgārjuna.

23 Jones (1978) p. 16.

24 Murti, T.R.V. The Central Philosophy of Buddhism. Boston: Unwin Paperbacks, 1980, p. 104.

25 Chatterjee, K.N. Vasubandhu's Vijñāptimātratāsiddhi with Sthiramati's Commentary. Varanasi: Kishor Vidya Niketan, 1980, p. xxxvi.

Yogācāras, it means 1) *grāhya-grāhaka-abhāva* and 2) *tasya ca svabhāva*, i.e. 1) the (ultimate) non-reality of the relation of subject to object and 2) the (ultimate) reality of their (subjacent, monistic) Absolute.[26]

In depicting the Yogācāra as a response to the Madhyamaka, Stcherbatsky and others have situated the Yogācāra within a natural progression of thought. Stcherbatsky writes, "The Vijñānavāda school of Buddhism represents the latest and final form of that religion, the form in which, after having transformed India's national philosophy and leaving its native Indian soil, it spread over almost the whole of the Asiatic continent up to Japan in the East and Asia Minor in the West where it amalgamated with gnosticism."[27]

It is difficult to separate one's interpretation of the historical development from one's own ranking of the two schools. Either the Madhyamaka is seen as the precursor to the Yogācāra –important insofar as it paved the way for the culmination of Buddhist thought-- or, more commonly, Madhyamaka thought is seen as superior, and Yogācāra thought as a corruption or straying from the teaching of emptiness. In the former case, the Yogācāra is presented as a fulfillment of Nāgārjuna's philosophy --a working out of what was left undone by Nāgārjuna and his Mādhyamika followers. In the latter case, scholars such as Conze depict the development of the Yogācāra as a deviation from authoritative Buddhist scriptures:

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[26] Stcherbatsky, Theodor. The Madhyānta-vibhaṅga: Discourse on Discrimination Between Middle and Extremes. Leningrad: Bibliotheca Buddhica vol. 30, 1936, p. 4.

[27] Stcherbatsky (1936) p. 1.

> ...the 'meaning' of the text of the Prajñāpāramitā engaged the attention of these authors to such an extent that their letter was, as shown by a number of examples, freely manipulated and altered. And it was not only the 'meaning' they searched for, but the 'secret meaning', the reason for this being that the obvious meaning of the Prajñāpāramitā clearly favoured their rivals, the Mādhyamikas. In order to arrive at this 'hidden meaning', many verbal alterations, transpositions and additions were called for, and concern for philological accuracy was far from the minds of the Yogācārin authors.[28]

Whereas the Yogācārins are seen as straying away from the original and true meaning of the texts, the Mādhyamikas are seen as upholding it.

In the face of the majority view of the Yogācāra as a development which occurred in response to and opposition to the Madhyamaka, some scholars have cautioned against an overly simplistic depiction of the relation between these two schools. One problem with the views we have discussed so far is that they tend to overlook the philosophical complexity of both the Madhyamaka and Yogācāra schools. As D.T. Suzuki points out,

> Most Buddhist scholars are often too ready to make a sharp distinction between the Mādhyamika and the Yogācāra schools, taking the one as exclusively advocating the theory of emptiness (*śūnyatā*) while the other is bent single-mindedly on an idealistic interpretation of the universe. They thus further assume that the idea of emptiness is not at all traceable in the *Yogācāra* and that idealism is absent in the *Mādhyamika*. This is not exact as a matter of historical fact.[29]

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28 Edward Conze. "The Yogācārin Treatment of Prajñāpāramitā Texts." Proceedings of the Twenty-Third International Congress of Orientalists. Denis Sinor, ed. London: The Royal Asiatic Society, 1954, p. 231.

29 Suzuki, Daisetz Teitaro. "The Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra as a Mahāyāna Text, in Especial Relation to the Teaching of Zen Buddhism." EB 4 (1928) p. 255.

Suzuki makes the important point that we need to avoid associating a school exclusively with a single doctrine. A second type of oversimplification consists in exaggerating the unity of a school. Louis de La Vallée Poussin cautions that we cannot define a particular school based upon a single author, and reminds that there exists variation within a school, when he states "Peut-on douter qu'il y ait *Mādhyamikas* et *Mādhyamikas*, *Yogācāras* et *Yogācāras*?"[30]

This is not to deny that there is a difference between the two schools. Diana Paul points out perhaps the most basic difference:

> Yogācāra or Vijñānavāda, while adhering to this [Mahāyāna] central doctrine of Emptiness, more extensively explores the question of the nature of subjectivity, that is, the constituents of mental processes that deceive the perceiver into thinking that self-existent entities do indeed exist.[31]

A difference between the Madhyamaka and early Yogācāra writings, however, does not imply a disagreement between them. As Richard King remarks in his excellent analysis of the relation between the two schools:

> Although the works of Asaṅga and Vasubandhu do show a marked development of ideas in the delineation and analysis of the yogic path when compared to their Mādhyamika predecessors, this should not necessarily be seen as

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30 Quoted in Harris (1991) p. x.

31 Paul, Diana Y. Philosophy of Mind in Sixth-Century China: Paramārtha's 'Evolution of Consciousness.' Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1984, p. 5.

characteristic of an antithetical attitude toward the earlier exposition of Mahāyāna philosophy.[32]

IV. Phases of the Yogācāra

Rather than categorically dismissing modern scholarship which points to a dispute between the Madhyamaka and Yogācāra schools, I will attempt to define more distinctly the historical and textual boundaries of this dispute. Quite clearly, a conflict arose between individuals who consciously aligned themselves with the Madhyamaka and the Yogācāra schools. It is far from clear, however, that this conflict goes back to the early stages of the Yogācāra school.

Evidence of discord between Mādhyamikas and Yogācārins does not appear until the middle of the sixth century CE. At this time the Madhyamaka thinker, Bhāvaviveka (c. 490-570 CE), explicitly identified and repudiated the views of Yogācāra thinkers in his commentaries on Nāgārjuna's treatises and in his own works.[33] Counter to these attacks, Dharmapāla (c. 530-561 CE), on the Yogācāra side, criticized what he saw as the nihilistic tendencies of Madhyamaka thinkers.[34] These disputes, often vituperative in character, carried on through later thinkers such as the

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32 King, p. 660.

33 See especially Bhāvaviveka in Chap. 25 of Prajñāpradīpa and Candrakīrti in Madhyamakāvatāra.

34 For a discussion of the dates of Bhāvaviveka and Dharmapāla, and the connection between these two thinkers, see Kajiyama, Yuichi. "Bhāvaviveka, Sthiramati, and Dharmapāla," WZKSO 12-13 (1968-9) 193-203.

Yogācārin commentator, Sthiramati (c. 510-570 CE[35]) and the Prāsaṅgika Mādhyamika, Candrakīrti (c. 600-650 CE).[36]

The existence of these disputes does not imply, however, that from the beginning the Madhyamaka and Yogācāra schools were antithetical. As Stefan Anacker points out regarding the antagonism between Bhāvaviveka and Dharmapāla,

> ...these are really the disagreements of sixth-century followers of Nāgārjuna and Vasubandhu. They belong to a time when Buddhism had become an academic subject at places such as the University of Nālandā. They may have disagreed because they were academics fighting for posts and recognition.[37]

The fault lies not in seeing the existence of a dispute between the Madhyamaka and Yogācāra, but in the tendency to view early Yogācāra philosophy through the lens of later writers --either later commentators within the Yogācāra school or later detractors of the Yogācāra in the Madhyamaka school. I will argue that modern studies of Buddhism, in drawing from the later commentarial traditions of both schools, have transposed onto early Madhyamaka and Yogācāra writings interpretations which may be neither historically nor philosophically accurate.[38] Against

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35 For a discussion of Sthiramati's dates, see Frauwallner, Erich. "Landmarks in the History of Indian Logic" WZKSO 5 (1961) p. 136.

36 For a discussion of the dates of Candrakīrti see Vaidya, P.L. Études sur Āryadeva et son Catuḥśataka, Chapitres viii-xvi. Paris: P. Guethner, 1923, pp. 52 ff.

37 Anacker, Stefan. Seven Works of Vasubandhu, the Buddhist Psychological Doctor. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1984 (reprinted 1986) p. 3.

38 For example, Eckel's vision regarding the relation between the Madhyamaka

this tendency, I will ask that we view the Madhyamaka and Yogācāra schools not as monolithic, unchanging entities, but as developing systems of thought.

Some modern authors, although they recognize phases in the development of the Yogācāra, revert to treating the Yogācāra and Madhyamaka schools as discrete and constant entities when they speak of the relation between them. Chatterjee, for example, asserts at one point that "two sharply demarcated phases can be distinguished in the evolution of the Yogācāra system."[39] Yet when he compares the Madhyamaka and Yogācāra schools, he treats them each as monolithic wholes, contrasting the Madhyamaka as a system which is "all criticism," with the Yogācāra as a "speculative system."[40] Likewise, Stcherbatsky states that "the Yogācāra school is divided into the ancient one, or the followers of Āryāsaṅga, and the

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and Yogācāra schools is largely shaped by his extensive research on the Madhyamaka writer Bhāvaviveka. One cannot read Bhāvaviveka without seeing a vivid conflict between the Madhyamaka and the Yogācāra schools. While the existence of this conflict cannot be denied, one may question whether it existed throughout the history of the Yogācāra school.

Eckel calls for a recognition of divisions within the Mahāyāna, and specifically, a recognition of the distinction between the Madhyamaka and the Yogācāra (e.g. (1985) pp. 28-29). In a certain sense, I am taking Eckel's point one step further, asking us not only to recognize distinctions within the Mahāyāna, but also within the Madhyamaka and the Yogācāra. I am arguing not only against a monolithic conception of the Mahāyāna, but against a monolithic conception of the Madhyamaka and Yogācāra schools as well. Specifically, I am asking us to pay attention to the early phases of these schools, as distinct from their later developments. As I shall argue, a recognition of this finer distinction between periods of these two schools ends up blurring the larger distinction between the two schools as a whole, for it becomes clear that the early Yogācāra writers were close doctrinally to the early Madhyamaka writings of Nāgārjuna.

39 Chatterjee, Ashok Kumar. The Yogācāra Idealism. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1962 (reprinted 1987) p. 30.

40 Chatterjee (1962) p. 147.

new one, or the followers of Dignāga."[41]

Other scholars have been more careful in recognizing a distinction between phases of the Yogācāra.[42] Kenneth Inada distinguishes between an earlier system which he calls Yogācāra; a middle one stemming from the Yogācāra, the Sarvāstivāda and Śūnyavāda, which he calls Vijñānavāda; and a later one which he calls the Nyāyavāda. According to this scheme, Maitreya, Asaṅga and Vasubandhu belong to the Vijñānavāda. Inada remarks that "particular attention should be paid with respect to the close affinity of the Śūnyavāda and the Vijñānavāda."[43]

Alan Sponberg divides the development of the Yogācāra until the 6th or 7th century into four phases: early Yogācāra, which encompasses several lines of development including the Yogācāra sutras and also the Abhidharma tradition reflected in the Yogācārabhūmi; transitional Yogācāra, consisting in the Dharmadharmatāvibhāga, the Madhyāntavibhāga, and the Mahāyānasūtrālamkāra; classical Yogācāra defined by the Mahāyānasamgraha; and scholastic Yogācāra, beginning with the Vimśatikā and Trimśikā and including later commentaries in India.[44]

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41 Stcherbatsky, Theodor. The Conception of Buddhist Nirvana. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1968, p. 32.

42 Although the difference between phases of Yogācāra thought has not been given much attention in Western thought, some work has been done on this topic in Japanese scholarship. E.g., Hotori, Rishō. "Yogācāra and Vijñaptimātravāda," in Nihon Bukkyō Gakkai Nempō 45, 73-85; and "A Problem [in the Philosophical History] of the Yogācāras: On their Philosophical Standpoint before the Arising of Vijñaptimātra Thought," in Tetsugaku Nempō (Annual of Philosophy, Published by the Faculty of Literature, Kyushu University) 41, 25-53.

43 Inada, Kenneth K. Nāgārjuna: A Translation of his Mūlamadhyamakakārikā with an Introductory Essay. Tokyo: Hokuseido Press, 1970, pp. 28-29.

44 Sponberg, Alan. "The *Trisvabhāva* Doctrine in India and China: A Study of

Paul Griffiths likewise distinguishes between four phases of the Yogācāra school, yet his classifications differ from those of Sponberg. The first phase of the Yogācāra Griffiths calls the pre-systematic. This phase consists in scattered references to Yogācāra themes such as the theory of mind-only in texts such as the Samdhinirmocana. The second phase is the early systematic, and includes as its major texts the Yogācārabhūmi, the Mahāyānasūtrālamkāra, the Madhyāntavibhāga and the Dharmadharmatāvibhāga. The third phase he calls the classical stage. He associates this phase with Asaṅga and Vasubandhu, and the texts comprising this phase are the Mahāyānasamgraha, the Abhidharmasamuccaya, parts of the Yogācārabhūmi, the Vimśatikā, Trimśikā and the Trisvabhāvanirdeśa. The fourth stage he calls the commentarial stage. This consists in the commentaries on the above texts by later Yogācāra writers such as Dharmapāla, Sthiramati and Asvabhāva.[45]

Both Sponberg's and Griffiths' periodization of the Yogācāra are extremely useful. We can see, however, that there are certain incompatibilities between them. Whereas Griffiths places the Yogācārabhūmi together with the five texts which are attributed to Maitreya, Sponberg separates the Yogācārabhūmi from the Maitreya texts and puts it in an earlier phase. Furthermore, whereas Griffiths groups the texts which are attributed to Vasubandhu together with those which are attributed to Asaṅga, Sponberg puts these two groups of texts into separate groups. The incompatibilities between Griffiths' and Sponberg's models are due in part to

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Three Exegetical Models." Ryukoku Daigaku Bukkyo Bunka Kenkyujo Kiyo XXI (1983) p. 115 n. 1.

45 Griffiths (1986) pp. 77-79.

ambiguities in provenance of the texts they seek to classify. They attempt to divide and categorize texts whose dates and authorship are undetermined.

In this dissertation I will treat the cluster of texts attributed to Maitreya, Asaṅga and Vasubandhu as one period in the development of Yogācāra thought. Ideally, one could make finer distinctions within this group on the basis of the authorship of the texts which comprise it. However, given the materials which are currently available, it is not possible to determine with absolute certainty the authorship of these texts.[46] In addition, we need to take into account the connection between the root verses of these texts and their commentaries. The root verses of some of the texts attributed to Maitreya contain with them commentaries by Asaṅga and Vasubandhu. It is nearly impossible to interpret the terse and often cryptic verses without the aid of their commentaries. Thus, for example, even if we wish to classify the root verses of the Mahāyānasūtrālamkāra as being by Maitreya, our treatment of these verses is, for all practical purposes, inseparable from Asaṅga's commentary. It thus does not make sense to place the Mahāyānasūtrālamkāra in a category separate from the other texts attributed to Asaṅga. Nor, at least in the context of this discussion, is there sufficient grounds to divide the body of texts attributed to Maitreya, Asaṅga and Vasubandhu in terms of the doctrines which they present. Finally, there is sufficient reason to believe that chronologically, these texts are all close together.

The first stage I will refer to as the pre-Yogācāra phase. This consists in the Saṃdhinirmocana, the Mahāyāna-abhidharma-sūtra,[47] and scattered

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[46] For a further discussion regarding the problems in assigning authorship to the early Yogācāra texts, see below, Chap. 2, Sects. II-III.

[47] This text is now lost, but is quoted frequently in other works, especially those

sūtric references to key Yogācāra ideas.[48] Following the pre-Yogācāra is the early Yogācāra, which consists in the writings of Maitreya, Asaṅga and Vasubandhu, and is characterized by the systematization of ideas introduced in the pre-Yogācāra phase.[49] The last phase within the purview of this study is the late Yogācāra, which consists in the commentarial literature by authors such as Dharmapāla and Sthiramati.[50]

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of Asaṅga.

48 The periodization of the Yogācāra which I use corresponds closely to that of Griffiths. The only changes are in the names of the phases, and in combining the middle two of Griffiths' phases into one.

49 Whereas Sponberg and Griffiths include the Triṃśikā and Viṃśatikā with the other writings attributed to Vasubandhu, I leave open the question the authorship of these two texts. For a further discussion regarding this question, see below, Chap. 2, Sect. III.

50 We can also distinguish between further developments within the Yogācāra tradition. Within what I am calling later Yogācāra, there arose two clearly defined streams of thought: the Nirākāravijñānavāda, beginning with Guṇamati (c. 490 CE) and Sthiramati (c. 510-570 CE); and the Sākāravijñānavāda, beginning with Dignāga (c. 480-540 CE) and Dharmapāla (c. 530-561 CE). These two streams of thought were introduced into China separately, by Paramārtha and Hsüan-tsang, respectively.

Finally, there exists a phase entailing an active synthesis of Madhyamaka and Yogācāra doctrine. This was begun by Śāntirakṣita (c. 725-784 CE), a representative of the Nirākāravijñānavāda, and was further developed by his pupil Kamalaśīla (c. 740-795 CE). This group came to be known as the Yogācāra-Mādhyamika-Svātantrika (rNal 'byor spyod pa'i dbu ma rang rgyud pa) in Tibet. (For more on this syntheses between the Madhyamaka and Yogācāra, see Jitsudō Nagasawa's "Kamalaśīla's Theory of the Yogācāra." JIBS 10:1 (1962) 34-41.)

V. The Distinction Between the Historical and Philosophical Questions Regarding the Relation Between the Madhyamaka and Yogācāra Schools

In assessing the relation between the Madhyamaka and Yogācāra schools, scholars have tended to base their views almost exclusively upon philosophical analyses. This holds true both for the majority of scholars who have seen the two schools as discontinuous, and for the minority who have argued for the continuity of the two schools. Rarely has the issue of the early Yogācāra's relation to the Madhyamaka been addressed from an historical point of view. Instead, scholars have compared the philosophical passages of early Yogācāra writings with those of Nāgārjuna and other Madhyamaka thinkers, and from there have interpolated the historical relation between these texts and the schools of Buddhism which they are taken to represent.

Analyses of this type run the risk of conflating two related yet distinct questions. The first of these questions is historical and doxographical: Were the early Yogācāra writers putting themselves forward as a Buddhist philosophical school in opposition to Nāgārjuna's Madhyamaka? The second question is philosophical: Are the early Yogācāra writings philosophically compatible with those of Nāgārjuna? The first question requires finding out as much as possible about the context in which the early Yogācāra texts were written. The second question can be addressed through a comparison of philosophical writings contained within these texts. While the historical and the philosophical questions, and the genres of literature to which they pertain, are distinct, this is not to say they are discontinuous. In treating these two fields of investigation as mutually informing, this dissertation seeks to establish the overall continuity of the early Yogācāra school with Nāgārjuna's Madhyamaka.

It is worth pausing briefly here to clarify my usage of the term "doxography." Doxography means literally the recording of opinions, beliefs or conjectures. The use of the term dates back to Theophrastus (c. 350 BC), who compiled a sixteen volume systematic historical work entitled "Opinions of the Physicists." The first volume of this work presents a summary of the teachings of Theophrastus' predecessors in the field of philosophy. The organizing principle of Theophrastus' presentation is purely chronological. Approximately one century later, Diogenes Laërtius, in his work Lives and Opinions of the Famous Philosophers, modified this approach and organized the philosophers and their views into schools. Diogenes disregarded all chronological relationships, and made no attempt to contextualize a particular thinker's ideas within a sequence of arguments, except those of his particular school.[51]

My use of the term doxography combines the approaches of both Theophrastus and Diogenes, examining the views of Mahāyāna Buddhist philosophers within the contexts of both their chronological sequence and their scholastic affiliation. For the purposes of this discussion, I define doxography as the classification of doctrine into schools of thought, and treat it as a sub-category within the larger category of the history of ideas. In the doxographical sections of this dissertation, the focus of investigation is not the philosophical doctrines themselves, but the classification of these ideas within the history of Buddhist thought. When, for example, in Chapter Four, I speak of the doxographical self-understanding of the early Yogācāra writers, I refer to their own positioning of themselves within the Buddhist

51 "Philosophy, Historiography of" in The Encyclopedia of Philosophy, Paul Edwards, ed. vol. 6. New York: Macmillan Co. and the Free Press, 1967.

Tradition –which group they consciously affiliated themselves with, and how they saw that group relating to other divisions within the Buddhist fold.

The tendency among modern scholars to favor a philosophical treatment of the early Yogācāra can be explained in part by the paucity of historical materials regarding the Buddhist Tradition in India at that time. As Schmithausen points out, however, despite the questions which remain regarding the literary history of early Yogācāra texts, "we have no choice but to try to reconstruct the historical development of Yogācāra thought if we want to re-enact it, as it were, as a dynamic, living process, and not merely take stock of the petrified (and often incoherent) results."[52] Thus, for Schmithausen, this means that we cannot merely treat a concept such as the storehouse consciousness (*ālayavijñāna*) as a finished product, but need to examine when, where, and why it first arose. Schmithausen's view leaves us with two imperatives. First, we must examine the pertinent historical information regarding the early Yogācāra; and second, we must search the philosophical writings themselves for indications of the context within the history of ideas in which they were written.

Among the few sources of biographical information regarding Asaṅga and Vasubandhu are the Tibetan Buddhist histories, and the travel logs of Chinese Buddhist pilgrims to India. Besides being few in number, these sources are of dubious historical accuracy. Regarding the travel log of the Chinese Buddhist pilgrim, Hsüan-tsang, for example, Pei-Yi Wu writes,

The *Ta-T'ang hsi-yü chi*, dictated by the master to a disciple and

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[52] Schmithausen (1987) p. 2.

In this passage, Schmithausen summarizes and advocates the view which Shinjō Suguro expresses in "The Formation of the Ālayavijñāna theory: Centering on its Relation to manas." Sanzō Nos. 136-137, 1977, p. 127f (Japanese).

> running to nearly a hundred thousand characters, gives the barest outline of the traveler's own activities but dwells on the description of the some one hundred thirty states that Hsüan-tsang visited. The description is based on secondary sources --local lore and legends-- and almost never on his own observations.[53]

While I will use Hsüan-tsang and Fa-hsien's travel logs and the Tibetan histories of Buddhism to elucidate the relation between the early Madhyamaka and Yogācāra schools, I will not treat these sources as historical documents in the strict sense: the degree to which these documents correspond to fact is certainly of great interest, but it is not the central question here.

Instead, these sources are valuable insofar as they present Buddhist views of who Asaṅga and Vasubandhu were, and where they fit into the Buddhist Tradition of their time. As John Powers points out, although the religious biographies of Asaṅga may be of questionable veracity,

> This does not mean that the traditional accounts of his life should be simply dismissed. Despite their obvious flaws in terms of historical accuracy, the traditional biographies may contain some kernels of historical facts.... They provide information about how Buddhists perceive Asaṅga, how his life exemplifies Buddhists paradigms and values, and how Buddhists have viewed the connections between his biography and his thought.[54]

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53 Wu, Pei-Yi. "An Ambivalent Pilgrim to T'ai Shan in the Seventeenth Century" in Pilgrims and Sacred Sites in China. Susan Naquin and Chün-fang Yü, eds. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992, p. 67.

54 Powers, John. Two Commentaries on the *Saṃdhinirmocana-sūtra* by Asaṅga and Jñānagarbha. Studies in Asian Thought and Religion vol. 13. Lewiston:

In this study I treat the historical and biographical accounts as ideological depictions, rather than factual records of the particular events they contain. I do not purport to be tracing the lives of the historical Asaṅga and Vasubandhu, but the image of Asaṅga and Vasubandhu, and the ideas they represented.

In attempting to answer the historical question regarding the relation between the Madhyamaka and Yogācāra schools, I will also look to the early Yogācāra literature itself for doxographical indications. I will seek to determine which divisions the early Yogācāra writers saw to exist within the Buddhist fold, and where they placed themselves among those divisions. As with my treatment of the historical sources, I acknowledge that the depiction of the Buddhist Tradition which we uncover through an examination of the early Yogācāra literature may not correspond with historical fact. Again, however, my primary concern is to uncover an ideological depiction of Buddhism --*viz.*, the conceptual map that the early Yogācāra writers had of their own tradition.

The early Yogācāra literature will also be the basis for addressing the second question regarding the relation between the Madhyamaka and Yogācāra schools: Are the early Yogācāra writings philosophically compatible with those of Nāgārjuna?[55] In the Buddhist case, hermeneutical models for interpreting internal diversity are expressed under the rubric of

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Edwin Mellon Press, 1992, p. 23.

[55] It should be noted that although this question deals with philosophy, here I am not reading the Buddhist philosophical sources as a philosopher, strictly speaking. That is to say, I am not analyzing them as part of an inquiry into the nature of reality.

philosophy. As we shall see, for example, the distinction between two levels of interpretation of the Buddha's teachings is intimately connected with the principle of the ineffability of the absolute. And the idea that the Buddha put forth three successive levels of teaching is intimately tied to an analysis of the doctrine that all phenomena lack intrinsic nature. In these cases, and in general, explanations of the nature of reality constitute the explanatory framework for how the Buddha revealed this reality, and *vice versa*. In this sense, the Yogācāra philosophical texts provide a context for defining and understanding distinctions within the Buddhist tradition. In the Buddhist case, and perhaps in general, a close examination of religious philosophical writings can contribute to our understanding of the history of the religious tradition. As Schmithausen suggests, an examination of ideas presented within Yogācāra philosophical texts may indeed shed light on their literary history.[56]

In treating both the historical sources and the philosophical sources within the context of the history of ideas, this dissertation brings together two genres of literature which usually are treated quite separately. Rather than treating historical and philosophical sources as disparate, it brings them together as ideological accounts of the Buddhist Tradition, and of reality more broadly, which are expressed in narrative and philosophical terms, respectively. Thus, although I am stressing the importance of distinguishing between the historical and philosophical questions, I am treating them as interrelated. Neither of the two types of source --historical or philosophical-- by itself gives us a full indication of the relation between the Madhyamaka and Yogācāra schools. In combining an analysis of both

56 Schmithausen (1987) pp. 2-3.

sources under the rubric of the history ideas, however, we can at least come closer to understanding the relation between the early phases of these two Mahāyāna Buddhist schools.

VI. Synopsis of the Dissertation

In Chapter Two, with the importance of recognizing the different phases of Yogācāra thought well in mind, I will define who the early Yogācāra thinkers were, and when they lived relative to other thinkers in the Madhyamaka and Yogācāra schools. In Chapter Three, I will begin an investigation of the historical question regarding the relation between the early Madhyamaka and Yogācāra schools by presenting the traditional biographical accounts of Asaṅga and Vasubandhu. In particular, I will search these accounts for evidence regarding divisions within the Buddhist fold. This search will continue in Chapter Four, in which I will seek doxographical indications within the early Yogācāra literature. In the final two chapters, the focus of the investigation will shift to the philosophical question regarding the relation between the early Yogācāra and Madhyamaka. In Chapter Five I will define two models, the two truths and the three natures, which are central to early Madhyamaka and Yogācāra thought, respectively. Finally, in Chapter Six, I will compare the model of three natures with that of two truths, as well as other elements within Nāgārjuna's thought.

Chapter 2
The Identity of the Early Yogācāra Writers

I. Introduction

The texts associated with the early Yogācāra are attributed to three authors: Maitreya, Asaṅga and Vasubandhu. These figures are regarded, both within the Buddhist Tradition and by modern scholars of Buddhism, as the founders or systematizers of the Yogācāra school. This chapter will examine problems regarding the identity of these figures --who they were and when they lived. Certain fundamental questions concerning the early Yogācāra writers remain unanswered. First, there is the issue of whether Maitreya was an actual historical figure. Second, there is the question, recently raised in Western scholarship, as to whether there were one or two Buddhist writers by the name of Vasubandhu. Finally, there is the question of when the early Yogācāra writers lived. This chapter will examine these three questions, gathering the available evidence and tracing how this evidence has been treated by modern scholars. The goal of this inquiry is not to present definitive answers to each of these questions. Indeed, as I shall argue, there is not sufficient evidence to support an unequivocal answer to any of them.[57] Instead, this chapter will consider the implications which

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[57] As Paul Griffiths points out, "The origins of the Yogācāra tradition in India are largely lost to us. The few available pieces of evidence are sufficiently problematic that it is difficult to draw any definite historical conclusions. We simply do not know exactly when, where or, in any detail, why Indian Buddhist thinkers began to develop those philosophical views which have come to be judged by Buddhist historians and Western scholars as especially characteristic of the Yogācāra" (Griffiths (1986) p. 76).

different proposed answers have for the central argument of this dissertation.

II. The Historicity of Maitreya

The earliest figure associated with the Yogācāra is Maitreya. Maitreya is often regarded as the founder of the Yogācāra school, yet it is uncertain whether he was an historical individual. According to traditional accounts (e.g., the accounts of Bu-ston, Tāranātha, Paramārtha and Hsüan-tsang), Maitreya is a Bodhisattva who resides in Tuṣita heaven. These traditional sources recount that Maitreya revealed the teachings of the Mahāyāna to Asaṅga, who ascended to Tuṣita heaven in search of a true understanding of emptiness. According to the Tibetan tradition, these teachings take the form of the Five Treatises: the Mahāyānasūtrālamkāra (MSA) Madhyāntavibhāga (MV), Dharmadharmatāvibhāga (DDV), Uttaratantra (UT) and Abhisamayālamkāra (ASA).[58] The Chinese Buddhist tradition, in addition to these texts, attributes the Yogācārabhūmi (YBh) to Maitreya, whereas the Tibetan tradition ascribes it to Asaṅga.

There are two general possibilities regarding the authorship of the texts attributed to Maitreya: first, that the texts were written by an historical person named Maitreya (who was Asaṅga's teacher); and second, that the texts were written by Asaṅga under the inspiration of the future Buddha

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58 See, for example Bu-ston in E. Obermiller's translation: The Jewelry of Scripture of Bu-ston. Delhi: Sri Satguru Publications, 1931, pp. 52-54.

Hsüan-tsang lists as the texts which Maitreya revealed to Asaṅga the "Yōgāçārya-śāstra [*sic*] the Mahāyāna Sūtrālaṅkāratikā, the Madhyānta Vibhaṅga Śāstra, etc."(Beal Samuel. Si-Yu-Ki. Buddhist Records of the Western World. Translated from the Chinese of Hiuen Tsiang (A.D. 629). 2 vols. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1994, vol. 1, p. 226).

Maitreya, whom he worshipped.[59] The solution to this puzzle is obscured in part by the fact that Maitreya is frequently referred to as Maitreyanātha. This name can be taken to support either of the above two possibilities. If we take Maitreyanātha to be a *karmadhāraya* compound, it means "Maitreya the protector," and thus denotes Maitreya, the future Buddha who resides in Tuṣita heaven. If, on the other hand, we take the compound Maitreyanātha to be a *bahuvrīhi*, it means "one who has Maitreya as his protector," and thus denotes Asaṅga, who worshipped Maitreya.[60]

Proponents of the view that Maitreya did exist in the flesh include Hakuju Ui,[61] Erich Frauwallner,[62] and Janice Dean Willis.[63] According to

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59 There is a third possibility, put forth by Frauwallner, that two of the texts attributed to Maitreya are neither by him nor by Asaṅga. Frauwallner ascribes the Uttaratantra to Sāramati. With regard to the Yogācārabhūmi, Frauwallner argues that the text was not written by any one person, but was put together over many generations. Frauwallner (1951a).

Schmithausen also argues that the Yogācārabhūmi is a compilation in his "Zur Literaturgeschichte der Älteren Yogācāra-Schule." ZDMG Supplement 1 (1969) 811-823; and Ālayavijñāna: On the Origin and the Early Development of a Central Concept of Yogācāra Philosophy. 2 vols. Tokyo: International Institute for Buddhist Studies, 1987, pp. 13-14, 183-193.

Schmithausen's analysis in (1967) was strongly opposed by Noriaki Hakamaya in "A Methodological Note on the Study of Early Vijñaptimātra Literature." Sanzō no. 147 (1977) (in Japanese). Hakamaya supports the attribution of the Yogācārabhūmi to Asaṅga.

In the context of this discussion, the resolution to this question is not crucial. Even if the Yogācārabhūmi contains multiple strata, some of which predate Asaṅga and Maitreya, as Frauwallner and Schmithausen suggest, we can still take either Maitreya or Asaṅga to be the compiler of the text, and thus take it as representative of the views they espouse.

60 Jacques May points out these two possible interpretations of the name Maitreyanātha (May, Jacques. "La Philosophie Bouddhique Idéaliste." Asiatsche Studien (Etudes Asiatique) 25 (1971) pp. 290-293).

61 Ui, Hakuju. "On the Author of the Mahāyāna-sūtrālaṃkāra." ZII 6:2 (1928) 215-222; and "Maitreya as an Historical Personage," Indian Studies in Honor of

Ui, who presents the most extensive argument for Maitreya's existence, Maitreya lived sometime before 350 CE. He was the teacher of Asaṅga, and the author of central Yogācāra texts.[64] One of the central factors in arguing that Maitreya was an historical figure is that there exist both stylistic and doctrinal differences between the texts which are attributed to him, and those which are attributed to Asaṅga. Willis argues along these lines, asserting that the works attributed to Maitreya

> ...differed in key respects from the writings of Asaṅga.... [I]t seems quite likely that these works were indeed written not by Asaṅga but by a historical personage named Maitreya who was associated with and taught Asaṅga. The fact that Asaṅga himself is referred to as "Maitreyanātha" is indicative only of his great respect for his teacher, Maitreya.[65]

Noting doctrinal differences not just between the texts attributed to Maitreya and those attributed to Asaṅga, but among the texts attributed to Maitreya themselves, Frauwallner proposes that there were not just two, but three

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Charles Rockwell Lanman. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1929, 95-101).

62 Frauwallner, Erich. "Amalavijñānam und Ālayavijñānam," in Festschrift Walther Schubring: Beiträge zur Indischen Philologie und Altertumskunde. Hamburg: 1951, 148-159.

63 Willis, p. 53.

64 According to Ui, Maitreya composed, in addition to the Five Treatises, the Yogācārabhūmi, the Vajracchedikāpāramitāśāstra, and the Yogavibhāgaśāstra, (This last text is now lost, but is quoted in later Yogācāra texts.)

65 Willis, p. 53.

separate authors: Sāramati, author of the Uttaratantra; Maitreya, author of the MSA, and Asaṅga, author of the Abhidharmasamuccaya (AS), Mahāyānasamgraha (MS), etc.

In opposition to the view that Maitreya was a real person, Paul Demiéville points to a universal religious tendency to ascribe sacred texts to divine origin. The effort among modern scholars to prove that Maitreya was an historical figure is due, he says to a "manie historiciste introduite de l'Occident."[66] In rejecting the historicity of Maitreya, Demiéville calls as a witness Sthiramati, one of the primary disciples of Asaṅga, who depicts Maitreya as having been the tutelary deity of Asaṅga.[67] Demiéville's analysis leaves the differences between the Five Treatises and other works by Asaṅga to be explained simply as variations within the collected works of one author. These variations can be attributed to a number of factors: perhaps the author is writing different genres of text, or is addressing different issues, or is aiming his texts at different audiences.

Demiéville's rejection of the historicity of Maitreya has been generally accepted among modern scholars.[68] David Ruegg, for example, agrees with

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66 Demiéville writes, "C'est par une surprenante méconnaissance des données les plus élémentaires de la psychologie religieuse (et littéraire), aussi bien que de la notion d'hisoricité, qu'on a voulu faire de Maitreya un 'personage historique.'" Demiéville (1954) p. 381, n. 4.

67 Demiéville (1954) pp. 381 and 386.

68 See, for example, Wayman, Alex. "A Report on the Śrāvaka-bhūmi and Its Author (Asaṅga). JBRS 42 (1956) p. 33.

Giuseppe Tucci, although he at first asserted that Maitreya was an historical personage, (Tucci, Giuseppe. On Some Aspects of the Doctrines of Maitreya(nātha) and Asaṅga. Calcutta: University of Calcutta, 1930) changed his opinion based on Demiéville's argument. Tucci writes that "the discussion whether Maitreyanātha was a historical personage or not...has been, to my mind, definitely settled by P. Demiéville in his recent study on the *Yogācārabhūmi* de

Demiéville that Maitreya was not the human teacher of Asaṅga, and credits Asaṅga with composing the Five Treatises, as well as other texts traditionally attributed to Asaṅga. Ruegg, however, does not dismiss the existence of differences between those texts which Asaṅga is said to have authored, such as the MS and AS and those texts which are attributed to Maitreya (i.e., the Five Treatises). The former group of texts, according to Ruegg, Asaṅga truly wrote. The latter group, however, he only compiled, drawing from older materials, and working under the inspiration of Maitreya.[69]

Ian Harris adds a variation to the argument that Maitreya was not an historical person. He suggests that Asaṅga's connection with Maitreya is not directly with the heavenly Bodhisattva, but with the character Maitreya who appears in the Prajñāpāramitā. The Aṣṭādaśasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā contains a section entitled the Maitreya Chapter, in which the theory of three natures is expounded. Harris points out that three nature theory is a fundamental characteristic of the Yogācāra, and suggests that the three natures may have become connected with Maitreya in such a way that he was considered the originator of its exposition (and hence of the Yogācāra school).[70]

Saṅgharakṣa" (Minor Buddhist Texts. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1956 part 1, p. 14).

69 Ruegg, David Seyfort. La Théorie du Tathāgatagarbha et du Gotra: Études sur la Sotériologie et la Gnoséologie du Bouddhisme. Publications de L'École Française d'Extrême-Orient. vol. 70. Paris: École Française d'Extrême-Orient, 1969, pp. 50-55.

70 Harris, p. 123.

For a further discussion regarding the Maitreya Chapter of the Aṣṭādaśasāhasrikāprajñāpāramitā, and its connection to early Yogācāra thought, see below, pp. 200-202.

In the context of this dissertation, it is not crucial to resolve the question of Maitreya's historicity. The subject of this study is the early Yogācāra, and this includes the writings attributed to Maitreya, Asaṅga and Vasubandhu as a group. Regardless of the question of individual authorship, this body of literature fits within the class of early Yogācāra literature. Even if we are to take certain of the Five Treatises to contain elements which were composed significantly earlier than Asaṅga, we must acknowledge, at minimum, that he worked closely with, and drew extensively from these texts. The grouping together of the writings of Maitreya, Asaṅga and Vasubandhu is supported by the Buddhist Tradition, and by the texts themselves, which, despite certain variations in style and content, present a coherent system of thought, and draw explicitly from one another. For the purpose of discussion I will follow the majority of modern scholars, and refer to Asaṅga as the author of the MSA, the MV, the AS, the MS and the YBh. This is not to imply, however, that the questions of Maitreya's historicity and the authorship of these texts are closed.

III. The Theory of Two Vasubandhus

I turn now to the question of the identity of Vasubandhu. In 1951, Erich Frauwallner sparked a great debate among modern scholars of Buddhism by proposing that there were two separate Buddhist philosophers by the name of Vasubandhu.[71] The first Vasubandhu, Vasubandhu the

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71 Although Frauwallner was the first to give an extensive defense of this theory, the idea of two Vasubandhus had already been suggested by a number of scholars, including the following:

Taiken Kimura in "The Date of Vasubandhu Seen from the Abhidharma-Kośa: The Four Texts," in Indian Studies in Honor of Charles Rockwell Lanman.

"elder," was a member of the Sarvāstivāda order during his early religious career, but later was converted to the Mahāyāna by his brother Asaṅga. He is the author of numerous Mahāyāna works. The second Vasubandhu, Vasubandhu the "younger," also belonged to the Sarvāstivāda order, but in his later career he leaned more and more towards the Sautrāntika point of view. He is the author of the Abhidharmakośa (AK) and its commentary.

A major impetus for Frauwallner's proposal was the discrepancy between the traditional dates which are given for Vasubandhu in Chinese sources. Within Chinese Buddhist literature, three different dates are given for Vasubandhu. The most widely diffused date is the year 900 after the Buddha's *parinirvāṇa* (AN). The promulgation of this date can be traced back to Paramārtha's Life of Vasubandhu (Life). Later, it is attributed to Paramārtha by two of his students in their own works.[72] The second traditional date for Vasubandhu is 1100 AN. Ironically, this date is also attributed to Paramārtha: two other students of Paramārtha mention it in prefaces they wrote to works he translated.[73] The final traditional date, the

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Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1929, 89-92.

Louis de La Vallée Poussin in L'Abhidharmakośa de Vasubandhu, Traduction et Annotations. 6 vols. Mélanges Chinois et Bouddhiques, vol. 16. Brussels: Institut Belge des Hautes Études Chinoises, 1971, vol. 1, pp. xxvii-xxviii.

Theodor Stcherbatsky in The Central Conception of Buddhism. Royal Asiatic Society, Prize Publication Fund, vol. 7., London: 1923, p. 2, n. 2; and Buddhist Logic. Bibliotheca Buddhica 26, Lenningrad: 1930-1932, vol. 1, p. 32, n. 2.

72 K'uei-chi tells us that the date is found in Paramārtha's commentary to the Madhyāntavibhāga (See Ch'eng wei shih lun shu chi, Taisho 1830, Chap. 1, p. 231 c, 2-3). Hui-hsiang, in his Fa hua ching chuan chi, quotes Paramārtha as giving this date for Vasubandhu (Taisho 2068, Chap. 1, p. 52 c, 25ff).

73 Hui-k'ai, a personal disciple of Paramārtha, gives 1100 AN in his preface to Paramārtha's translation of the Abhidharmakośa (Taisho 1559, p. 161a 15f). A later follower of Paramārtha, Tao-chi (576-637 CE), also gives this date in his

year 1000 AN, is found in Hsüan-tsang's travel log, and again in the corresponding passage of the biography written about him.

Rather than trying to determine which of these three dates is the correct one, as other modern scholars have done, Frauwallner accepts both the dates 900 AN and 1100 AN which are attributed to Paramārtha. According to Frauwallner, 900 AN and 1100 AN are not confusions regarding the date of one man, but references to two separate people named Vasubandhu. The year 900 AN applies to Vasubandhu "the elder." The date 1100 AN applies to Frauwallner's second Vasubandhu, "the younger," the author of the AK. As for the year 1000 AN which is found in Hsüan-tsang's travel log and his biography, Frauwallner dismisses it. He argues that the date 1000 AN is the same as 1100 AN, but is based on a Chinese calculation of the nirvāṇa era.

In arguing for the existence of two Vasubandhus, and trying to determine when exactly these individuals lived, Frauwallner appeals to Paramārtha's Life as a central authority. He assumes that by virtue of being the oldest source regarding Vasubandhu, Paramārtha's Life is the most reliable. Frauwallner states this position as follows:

> Time above all plays an outstanding role, in view of the particularities of Indian tradition. Thus, of our two chief authorities Paramārtha and Hsüan-tsang, it is Paramārtha who carries the greater weight by far. It is true that both are personally trustworthy. But Hsüan-tsang is later by a century, and we can see at every pace what sort of deformation tradition

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preface to Paramārtha's translation of Vasubandhu's Mahāyānasaṃgrahabhāṣya (Taisho 1595 p. 152b, 1). (Cited in Frauwallner, Erich. On the Date of the Buddhist Master of the Law Vasubandhu. Rome: Serie Orientale Roma no. 3, 1951. pp. 3-4.)

underwent during these hundred years.[74]

Given the deformation through time which Frauwallner postulates, it is presumably up to the modern scholar to "reform" the traditional sources in order to arrive at an historically accurate picture. Frauwallner ends up using this stance not only to subordinate other sources to that of Paramārtha, but also to choose which elements within Paramārtha's writings he wishes to accept as historically accurate: although he accepts Paramārtha's Life as the highest authority, Frauwallner frequently rejects or revises the information which is found therein. The most striking example of this is his assertion that there were two Vasubandhus, despite the fact that Paramārtha's Life is about one person.[75]

According to Frauwallner, the version of Paramārtha's Life as we have it now conflates two separate people, including elements from both of their lives. Frauwallner notes that the Life is divided into three sections. The first and last sections, he says, are about Vasubandhu the elder. The first section recounts the following details about Vasubandhu: He was born in Puruṣapura; his father was a Brahman Kauśika; he had two brothers, Asaṅga and Viriñcivatsa; and he was a member of Sarvāstivāda during his early religious career.[76] The last section of the Life tells of Vasubandhu's

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74 Frauwallner (1951b) p. 11.

75 Another example of Frauwallner's willingness to disregard the evidence from Paramārtha's text is his treatment of the question of the Gupta rulers. Frauwallner accepts the view held by Takakusu and others that the patrons of Vasubandhu were Skandagupta and his nephew Narasiṃhagupta, even though this contradicts Paramārtha's account, as discussed above.

76 According to Frauwallner, the works that Vasubandhu wrote during this phase

conversion to the Mahāyāna by his brother Asaṅga, and his authorship of many Mahāyāna works.[77] The middle section of the biography, according to Frauwallner, is about Vasubandhu the younger. This section tells us of Vasubandhu's defeat of the Sāṃkhya thinker Vindhyavāsa, his composition of the AK, his gaining the sponsorship of the Kings Vikramāditya and Bālāditya, his defense of the AK against attacks of the grammarian Vasurāta, his refusal to debate with Saṅghabhadra, and his death in Ayodhyā at the age of eighty.

Frauwallner defends his division of Paramārtha's text into two biographies on literary grounds, arguing that the three sections of the Life do not fit together chronologically. In particular, he questions the transition between the middle and final sections of the text:

> Vasubandhu stands at the end of a glorious career and has just refused a disputation with Saṅghabhadra on account of his old age. And now we are requested to believe that the old man is converted by this brother and develops yet a far-reaching activity at the service of Mahāyāna.[78]

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of his religious career were lost.

77 According to Frauwallner, the elder Vasubandhu predeceased his brother Asaṅga. This corresponds with the story in Hsüan-tsang's Records about Vasubandhu visiting Maitreya's heavenly abode after his death, and descending to earth to tell Asaṅga about it (Beal, Samuel. Si-Yu-Ki. Buddhist Records of the Western World. Translated from the Chinese of Hiuen Tsiang (A.D. 629). 2 vols. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1994, vol. 1, pp. 227-228 ; and Watters, Thomas. On Yuan Chwang's Travels in India 629-645 A.D. T.W. Rhys Davids and S.W. Bushell, eds. London: Royal Asiatic Society, 1904, vol. 1, pp. 357-358).

78 Frauwallner (1951b) p. 15.

Frauwallner's argument is based upon the assumption that narrative must be sequential. However, one might just as well argue that the progression from one section of the biography to another does not correspond to a linear passage of time. As Alex Wayman and Stefan Anacker point out, it could well be that Vasubandhu composed the AK and its commentary in his earlier years (middle section of the Life), then was converted to the Mahāyāna by his brother (final section of the Life), and then in his later years was challenged to defend the principles of the AK (middle section of the Life).[79] The fact that the Life discusses Vasubandhu's defense of the AK before it recounts his conversion to the Mahāyāna may simply be due to a narrative structure that is thematic rather than temporal.

A more general problem with Frauwallner's analysis is his vacillation between citing Paramārtha's Life as an authority, and rejecting or correcting particular elements within it. To stick to his principle of two Vasubandhus, Frauwallner has to reject the text which he has designated as the highest authority. And to reject Paramārtha's text, he has to abandon his principle that the oldest sources are the most accurate. Frauwallner attempts to circumvent this dilemma by asserting that the confusion of the two Vasubandhus in the text is due not to Paramārtha, but to his pupils.[80] The "mistakes," as he calls them, are the result of later interpolations into the text. Frauwallner is therefore able to maintain Paramārtha's status as a "personally trustworthy" source while simultaneously "reforming" the text

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79 Wayman, Alex. "Analysis of the Śrāvakabhūmi Manuscript." University of California Publications in Classical Philology, vol. 17. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1961, p. 24; and Anacker (1984) pp. 25-26, n. 13.

80 Frauwallner (1951b) p. 18.

which is attributed to him. In essence, Frauwallner ends up valuing the idea of Paramārtha the person above Paramārtha's text. Even further, by discrediting the text as a faithful representation of Paramārtha's views, Frauwallner substitutes his own conclusions for the authoritative voice of Paramārtha.

Despite Frauwallner's questionable treatment of Paramārtha's text, there is additional evidence which may render his theory of two Vasubandhus plausible. The Indian commentator Yaśomitra, a younger contemporary of Paramārtha makes a reference in one of his works which may indicate the existence of two Vasubandhus.[81] In his Sphutārthā Abhidharmkośavyākhyā, Yaśomitra mentions three times an "elder" (*vṛddhācārya* or *sthavira*) Vasubandhu.[82] According to Frauwallner, these references are to the elder Vasubandhu, the brother of Asaṅga, whose views are discredited in the AK by the younger Vasubandhu. The passages in question, however, are ambiguous. Anacker argues against Frauwallner that the terms *vṛddhācārya* and *sthavira* are not used by Yaśomitra to distinguish between an older and a younger Vasubandhu, but are used simply as expressions of respect. In two of the three passages where the terms are used, Anacker argues, the views being presented are not contrary to those

81 Frauwallner (1951b) p. 21.

82 The three references to Vasubandhu the elder are as follows:

āśrayabhūtarūpaṇād ity apara iti/ vṛddhācārya Vasubandhuḥ/ bhūtagrahaṇam āśrayabhūtapradarśanārtham//

ity apara iti/ sthaviro Vasubandhur ācārya-manorathopādhyāya evam āha/ (Ibid., 289:6)

avasthānahetvabhāvād bhāānām vināśa iti sthavira-Vasbuandhuprabhṛtighit ayaṃ hetur uktaḥ/ sa cāyuktaḥ/ (Ibid., 347:8-11)

(Wogihara, Unrai, ed. Sphutārtha Abhidharmakoṣa-vyākhyā of Yaśomitra. Tokyo, 1932-36, 35:20)

presented by the AK itself. Therefore, the elder to whom Yaśomitra refers may simply be Vasubandhu (i.e., the single author of both the AK and numerous Mahāyāna works). In the third passage where Yaśomitra mentions Vasubandhu the elder, Anacker says, although the view being presented is contrary to that in the AK, this view is attributed to Vasubandhu's teacher, Manoratha, and not to Vasubandhu. Therefore, the elder being referred to may still be the one Vasubandhu.[83]

Marek Mejor, who gives the most recent and thorough investigation of the commentaries on the AK,[84] supports Frauwallner's thesis of two Vasubandhus, although he questions certain of Frauwallner's interpretations of Yaśomitra's Sphutārthā. In particular, Mejor points to a passage in the AK where Vasubandhu quotes the viewpoint of the *pūrvācāryāḥ* (usually translated as previous teachers).[85] Yaśomitra's commentary explains that by *pūrvācāryāḥ*, Vasubandhu means the Yogācāras *ārya*-Asaṅga and others.[86]

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83 For other arguments against Frauwallner's interpretation of the SphutārthāAbhidharmakośa, see Griffiths, Paul. "Indian Buddhist Meditation-Theory: History, Development Systematization." Ph.D. Dissertation: University of Wisconsin, Madison, 1983, pp. 25ff; and Hall, Bruce Cameron. "Vasubandhu on 'Aggregates, Spheres and Components': Being Chapter One of the Abhidharmakośa." Ph.D. Dissertation: Harvard University, 1983, pp. 19-20.

84 Mejor, Marek. "Vasubandhu's Abhidharmakośa and the Commentaries Preserved in the Tanjur." Stuttgart: Alt-und Neu-Indische Studien, 1991.
In addition to Yaśomitra's Sphutārthā, Mejor examines eight other Indian commentaries on the AK preserved in the Tibetan Tanjur.

85 Mejor (1991) pp. 46-49. The scriptural passage in question is AK 3:50.

86 *pūrvācāryāḥ/ yogācāra āryāsaṅga-prabhṛtayaḥ/* (Wogihara (1932-4) 281:27.)
Sthiramati gives a similar gloss: *mal 'byor spyod pa'i sngon gyi slob dpon dag gis bshad do//* (P Tg. Tho. 32a8)
Pūrṇavardhana, on the other hand says they are the *pūrva-sautrāthikāḥ*: *sngon gyi slob cpon dag cs bya ba ni sngon gyi mdo sde pa dag go//* P Tg. Ju. 332b6; Thu 296b4).

In Frauwallner's interpretation, this is an indication that Yaśomitra regarded Asaṅga as old compared with Vasubandhu, the author of the AK. Mejor, on the other hand, argues that the expression *pūrvācāryāḥ*, as both Vasubandhu and Yaśomitra use it, does not indicate precedence in time. Rather, it is used to refer to the followers of a philosophical school or tradition.[87] Mejor argues that there is no evidence here, nor in any parts of the Indian commentaries on the AK, that Asaṅga predated the author of the AK. Thus, although Mejor adheres to the theory of two Vasubandhus, he reserves judgment as to their relative ages.

In addition to Yaśomitra's commentary to the AK, later references to this text also provide evidence regarding the question of two Vasubandhus. Padmanabh S. Jaini argues against Frauwallner's thesis of two Vasubandhus based upon a manuscript of the Abhidharmadīpa and its commentary (hereafter referred to collectively as the Dīpa).[88] The Dīpa presents a defense of Sarvāstivādin doctrine, and in doing so launches numerous assaults upon the author of the AK. The nature of these critiques, in particular, their use of the invectives *vaitulika* and *ayoga-śūnyatā*, which are names associated with the Mahāyāna, are strong evidence, Jaini argues, that the author of the AK and the author of the early Mahāyāna texts such as the Trisvabhāvanirdeśa (TSN) were the same. Even more conclusive, Jaini

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87 Mejor adds that *pūrvācarya* is used in the same way by Haribhadra to describe Vasubandhu as part of the lineage of transmission of the Prajñāpāramitā-sūtras (Mejor (1991) p. 48). The compound *pūrvācarya* is taken here to mean "teacher who follows tradition," rather than "previous teacher."

88 Jaini, Padmanabh S. "On the Theory of Two Vasubandhus." Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies 21:1 (1958) 48-53.

The manuscript of the Abhidharmadīpa was found in the Shalu monastery in Tibet by Pandit Rāhula Sāṅkṛtyāna in 1937. It has been edited by Jaini and published in the Tibetan Sanskrit Works Series, Patna, 1959.

argues, is the Dipa's critique of the *Kośakāra* for advocating the doctrine of three *svabhāvas*, a doctrine closely associated with the Yogācāra school. Jaini concludes that the Vasubandhu who wrote the AK is the same as the one who wrote numerous Mahāyāna texts. As to when this Vasubandhu lived, and his relation to Asaṅga, Jaini reserves final judgment, although he does suggest that this Vasubandhu may well have been the brother of Asaṅga.

Amar Singh Mourya presents a counter-argument to Jaini's position, and defends Frauwallner's theory of two Vasubandhus. According to Mourya, the term *vaitulika* which is used in the Dīpa to criticize Vasubandhu, was frequently applied to "the Prāsaṅgika Mādhyamikas, but not to the Vijñānavādins, who themselves disagree with them."[89] The same is true, he says, of the term *ayoga-śūnyatā*. Mourya argues that if we are to take these two terms as applying to the Mahāyāna, we must take them as referring to the Madhyamaka specifically. The terms, therefore, cannot be referring to anyone who was associated with the Yogācāra: since the Madhyamaka and Yogācāra schools are mutually opposed, Mourya argues, a person could not have been associated with them both. Mourya thus argues that the terms *vaitulika* and *ayoga-śūnyatā* are used in the Dīpa as general critiques, and do not point to any scholastic affiliation.[90] The object of these critiques, he concludes, is the author of the AK (Vasubandhu the younger), who was a separate person from the elder Yogācārin Vasubandhu.

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89 Mourya, Amar Singh. "Who was the Sautrāntika Vasubandhu?" Maha Bodhi 90 (1982) p. 11.

90 As for the Dīpa's use of the term *trisvabhāva*, Mourya argues that the reference is not to the Yogācāra division of reality into three aspects, but to the Sautrāntika triple division of time (*tri-kāla-svabhāva*) (Mourya, p. 12).

Mourya's argument is of particular interest here, in that it presupposes the very belief that this dissertation calls into question, i.e., that the Madhyamaka and Yogācāra were clearly defined movements in opposition to one another. Given the nature of the attacks which the Dīpa launches against the author of the AK, one could just as well argue contrary to Mourya's analysis that the Vasubandhu who wrote the AK is the same Vasubandhu who wrote many Mahāyāna texts, and that during the time in which the Dīpa was written,[91] terms such as *vaitulika* and *ayoga-śūnyatā* were used to criticize early Mahāyāna thinkers generally, before a division between the Madhyamaka and Yogācāra points of view had arisen. Indeed, one could take the fact that these terms, which later became specifically associated with the Madhyamaka, were applied to Vasubandhu as evidence that a division between the Madhyamaka and Yogācāra had not yet arisen.

In addressing the question of two Vasubandhus, a number of scholars have turned to the texts themselves which are attributed to Vasubandhu in order to determine whether they were written by one author. These scholars have adopted a stance articulated in a separate context by J. Duyvendak that "More important than any tradition about an ancient text, ascribing its authorship to such or such a person, is for me the testimony of the text itself. The text is, I believe, the primary historical fact."[92] Lambert Schmithausen is among the group of scholars who have sought the internal testimony of the text. Surveying the body of literature attributed to Vasubandhu,

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91 Jaini suggests that the Abhidharmadīpa and its commentary were written either during or shortly after the lifetime of *Kosākāra* Vasubandhu (Jaini (1958) p. 50).

92 Jan Julius Lodewijk Duyvendak, trans. Tao Te Ching, The Book of the Way and its Virtue. London: J. Murray 1954, p. 6. (Reprinted in Wisdom of the East Series, Rutland VT: Charles E. Tuttle, 1995.)

Schmithausen argues that the author of Viṃśatikā and Triṃśikā is the same person who wrote the AK, as well as the Vyākhyāyukti, Karmasiddhiprakarana, Pratītyasamutpādavyākhyā, and Pañcaskandhaka. Schmithausen bases this grouping upon his observation of internal similarities between these texts, as well as cross references between them. Schmithausen takes as a second group of texts the TSN and the commentaries on MV, DDV, MS and MSA.[93]

Although Schmithausen reserves final judgment regarding the question of two Vasubandhus, he sets apart the two groups of texts based upon his observation that certain "doctrinal peculiarities" which are found in the first group of texts are not found in the second group.[94] Schmithausen argues that the idealistic system presented in the Viṃśatikā is derived not from the Yogācāra theory of eight types of consciousness in three layers, but from the Sautrāntika theory of one-layered consciousness,[95] and that the

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93 Schmithausen, Lambert. "Sautrāntika-Voraussetzungen in Viṃśatikā und Triṃśikā." WZKSO 11 (1967) 109-136.

94 Schmithausen (1987) p. 263, n. 101.

Schmithausen's analysis (see esp. Schmithausen (1967)), as well as those of Wayman (1961) and Jaini (1958), influenced Frauwallner (of whom Schmithausen was a student), who revised his theory of two Vasubandhus in accordance with their findings. At first, Frauwallner declined to make any conclusions regarding the authorship of the Mahāyāna texts attributed to Vasubandhu, stating that the accounts of the life of Vasubandhu "either do not give any information at all about these works, or mention them in passages where the two Vasubandhus are confused with each other" (Frauwallner (1951b) p. 56). Later, however, Frauwallner proposed that the Sautrāntika Vasubandhu who wrote the Abhidharmakośa, like the elder Vasubandhu, eventually turned to the Yogācāra, and wrote the Karmasiddhiprakaraṇa, the Viṃśatikā and the Triṃśikā (Die Philosophie des Buddhismus. Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, Third Revised edition, 1969).

95 For a chart comparing the Yogācāra model of consciousness with the traditional scheme, see below, p. 214.

Trimśikā also contains Sautrāntika elements such as the theory of transformation of consciousness (*vijñānapariṇāma*)[96] Indeed, there are certain philosophical differences, such as the treatment of *vijñāna*, between the Trimśikā and Vimśatikā on the one hand, and Vasubandhu's other Mahāyāna writings on the other hand. There are also strong carryovers between the Kośa and the Trimśikā and Vimśatikā, which are not so apparent between the Kośa and Vasubandhu's other Mahāyāna writings. It is therefore tempting to ascribe to the theory of two Vasubandhus, and to say that the author of Kośa, the Trimśikā and the Vimśatikā is different from Asaṅga's brother who wrote the other early Mahāyāna works.

One might well agree with Schmithausen in accepting the existence of similarities in style and content as a positive criterion for establishing the same authorship for texts. The logical corollary of this assumption, however, is that when these similarities do not exist, the texts are not by the same author. This is more problematic as a methodology, for as we saw with the question of the authorship of the Five Treatises, equally plausible explanations can be given for the observed differences between texts. Furthermore, Schmithausen's stance presupposes a certain inflexibility of thought: he assumes that religious thought is systematic, and therefore different texts by the same author should fit together as a coherent whole. However, one could instead explain the discrepancies between different texts by the same author simply by saying that his thought has developed.

Along these lines, Étienne Lamotte and Stefan Anacker examine the Karmasiddhiprakarana by Vasubandhu.[97] Although the text as a whole

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96 Schmithausen (1967).

97 Anacker, Stefan. "Vasubandhu's Karmasiddhiprakarana and the Problem of the Highest Meditations." PEW 22:3 (1972) 247-258; and Lamotte, Étienne.

presents a Sautrāntika point of view, it contains a number of Mahāyāna elements, such as the concept of the *ālayavijñāna*, references to the Saṃdhinirmocana-sūtra, and what Anacker describes as "the Mahāyāna concept of a bodhisattva." Lamotte suggests, and Anacker argues, that these elements are evidence that there was one Vasubandhu who gradually shifted from the Sautrāntika to the Yogācāra points of view. In opposition to this view, Mourya appeals to the fact that the original Sanskrit version of the Karmasiddhiprakarana no longer exists, and argues that the Mahāyāna elements which Lamotte and Anacker find in the Karmasiddhiprakarana may be the result of later interpolations by the Chinese and Tibetan translators of this text.

In summary, there are three possibilities regarding the identity of Vasubandhu. The first general possibility is that there was one Vasubandhu, who was the brother of Asaṅga and who wrote the AK as well as numerous Mahāyāna works. The second possibility is that there were two Vasubandhus: one who wrote the AK and the other who wrote the Mahāyāna texts and was the brother of Asaṅga. Finally, there is the possibility that there were two Vasubandhus, but that the author of the AK also wrote the Triṃśikā and Viṃśatikā, while the brother of Asaṅga wrote the remaining Mahāyāna works such as the TSN and the commentaries on MV, MSA, etc. I believe that the evidence is too weak to accept unreservedly any one of the possibilities. This means that in my analysis, the Viṃśatikā and Triṃśikā will have to be treated with some caution, with the possibility in mind that they were written later than the other texts I am examining, and by an author different from the Vasubandhu who wrote the TSN and other early Yogācāra

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Karmasiddhiprakarana: The Treatise on Action by Vasubandhu. Eng. trans. by Leo Pruden. Berkeley: Asian Humanities Press, 1988.

texts which will form the basis of this study.

IV. The Dates of Asaṅga and Vasubandhu

Much of the effort expended by modern scholars placing Asaṅga and Vasubandhu within the history of Indian thought has focused upon the question of Vasubandhu's dates. This question has been a subject of debate for over one hundred years. While the participants in this debate have sought to establish a chronological dating for Vasubandhu, my examination of this problem will seek only to establish a relative dating. For the purposes of this study, it is important to establish only two facts regarding the dates of Asaṅga and Vasubandhu.

First, it must be clear that they postdated Nāgārjuna (c. 150-250 CE).[98] Otherwise, the question of their having written treatises in opposition to Nāgārjuna's Madhyamaka becomes meaningless. Second, it is important to establish a significant period of time between Asaṅga and Vasubandhu on the one hand, and later Buddhist thinkers such as Bhāvaviveka and Sthiramati, on the other hand. It is clear that by the time of Bhāvaviveka (c. 490-570 CE) and Sthiramati (c. 510-570 CE),[99] a conflict

98 The question of Nāgārjuna's dates is also extremely problematic. Although some scholars suggest that Nāgārjuna lived as early as 50 CE and others as late as 280 CE, the dates 150-250 CE are generally accepted among Japanese and Western scholars.

For an overview of the scholarship regarding Nāgārjuna's dates, see Ruegg (1981) pp. 4-6; and Nakamura, Hajime. Indian Buddhism: A Survey with Bibliographical Notes. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1980, p. 235.

See also Naoya Funahashi's "The Laṅkāvatāra-sūtra and the Time of Vasubandhu." JIBS 20:1 (1971) 321-326; and Shohei Ichimura's "Re-Examining the Period of Nāgārjuna: Western India, A.D. 50-150." JIBS 40:2 (1992) 8-14.

99 Regarding Sthiramati's dates, see Kajiyama (1968) p. 203.

had arisen between scholars who explicitly identified themselves with the Madhyamaka school and those who identified themselves with the Yogācāra school. In order to argue that Asaṅga and Vasubandhu were not involved in such a conflict, we have to establish a span of time long enough to allow for the development of a division between the representatives of the two schools.

The dates which have been given for Vasubandhu range from the end of the sixth century (proposed by Jyan Takakusu,[100] the translator of Paramārtha's Life of Vasubandhu) to the second half of the third century (proposed by Noël Péri, who gives one of the most extensive studies of the issue).[101] The chart on the following page presents an overview of the dates which modern scholars have proposed for Asaṅga and Vasubandhu.

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100 Takakusu, Junjiro. "A Study of Paramārtha's Life of Vasu-bandhu and the Date of Vasu-bandhu." JRAS 1905; and "The Date of Vasubandhu, the Great Buddhist Philosopher" in Indian Studies in Honor of Charles Rockwell Lanman. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1929, 79-88.

101 Péri, Noël. "A Propos de la Date de Vasubandhu." BEFEO11:3-4 (1911) 309-390.

	Asaṅga	Vasubandhu	Vasubandhu the Elder	Vasubandhu the Younger
N. Péri[102]	—	270-350	—	—
S. Anacker[103]	—	316-396	—	—
H. Ui[104]	310-390	320-400	—	—
U. Wogihara[105]	375-450	390-470	—	—
S. Lévi[106]	1st half of 5th c.	—	—	—
E. Frauwallner[107]	—	—	320-380	400-480
A. Wayman[108]	375-430	400-480		
M. Mejor[109]	—	—	—	400-480
J. Takakusu[110]	—	420-500	—	—
T. Kimura[111]	—	—	—	420-500

102 Péri (1911).

103 Anacker (1984).

104 Ui (1928a).

105 Unrai Wogihara, ed. Asaṅga's Bodhisattvabhūmi: ein dogmatischer Text der Nordbuddhisten. Leipzig: 1908, p. 16.

106 Sylvain Lévi, ed. and trans. Mahāyāna-sūtrālamkāra. Exposé de la Doctrine du Grand Véhicule selon le Système Yogācāra. 2 vols. Paris: Librairie Honoré Champion 1907 and 1911. vol. 2, pp. 1-2.

107 Frauwallner (1951b).

108 Wayman (1961) p. 23.

109 Mejor (1991).

110 Takakusu (1905a and 1929).

111 Kimura (1929).

The primary resource for determining the dates of Asaṅga and Vasubandhu are the dates which are given in Chinese Buddhist literature. As we discussed above, the traditional Chinese Buddhist sources contain three different dates for Vasubandhu: the years 900 and 1100 AN, which are both attributed to Paramārtha, and the year 1000 AN, which is given by Hsüan-tsang and reiterated by Hsüan-tsang's biographer.

The first problem is to decide which of the traditional dates is correct. Takakusu, taking Paramārtha's Life as the central authority, simply accepts the year 900 AN given therein, and rejects the other dates without presenting any analysis of them. Péri agrees that 900 AN is the correct date for Vasubandhu, although his route to this conclusion is considerably more complex. Péri argues that 1100 AN was the date which Paramārtha originally recorded in his Life. He argues that later redactors of the work changed the date to 900 AN to accord with what had become the more widely diffused tradition. This would explain why some pupils of Paramārtha, reading the unchanged version of Paramārtha's Life, record that he gave the date 1100 AN for Vasubandhu, while other pupils say that he placed Vasubandhu in 900 AN. Thus, although Péri takes 1100 AN to be the original date in Paramārtha's Life, he maintains that 900 AN is the correct date for Vasubandhu. According to Péri, Paramārtha copied the incorrect date of 1100 AN from an earlier biographical source.[112]

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112 This is where Frauwallner's analysis diverges from that of Péri. Frauwallner argues that there is no evidence of an earlier written biography of Vasubandhu, and therefore no basis for the conjecture that Paramārtha drew the incorrect date from a previous source. Instead, Frauwallner accepts both the dates 900 AN and 1100 AN which are attributed to Paramārtha. According to Frauwallner, 900 AN and 1100 AN are not confusions regarding the date of one man, but references to two separate people named Vasubandhu. The year 900 AN applies to

As for the year 1000 AN which is found in Hsüan-tsang's travel log and his biography, Péri dismisses it, proposing that Hsüan-tsang heard the date 1000 given for Vasubandhu during his travels in India. Among certain Buddhist circles in India, Péri says, Vasubandhu had come to be placed in the year 1000 AN in order to fit within one of the historical periods of the Dharma which the Buddha was said to have prophesied.[113]

Once Takakusu and Péri decided which of the three traditional dates to accept as correct, their next problem was to interpret what these dates meant. The traditional dates are based upon a chronology which sets the year zero at the *parinirvāṇa* of the Buddha. There is a problem in converting this chronology in that within the Buddhist tradition there are numerous and widely varying dates given for the Buddha's death.[114] Takakusu, in setting the date of the Buddha's death, chooses to use the "Dotted Record." This record, brought to China by Saṅghabhadra, is believed to contain one dot for every year which passed since the

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Vasubandhu the elder, the author of numerous Mahāyāna works, and 1100 AN applies to Vasubandhu the younger, the author of the AK (Frauwallner 1951b pp. 4-5, 10).

113 Frauwallner also dismisses Hsüan-tsang's date, but for different reasons. According to him, the date 1000 AN is the same as 1100 AN, but is based on a Chinese calculation of the nirvāṇa era. Both dates, Frauwallner says, apply to Vasubandhu the younger (Frauwallner 1951b, pp. 6-8).

114 In addition to there being numerous traditional dates for the Buddha, there is also the problem that modern scholars have disagreed as to the interpretation of these dates. Regarding the dates of the Buddha and his *parinirvāṇa*, see esp. Heinz Bechert's article, "The Date of the Buddha Reconsidered." Indologica Taurinensia 10 (1982) 29-36, and also Bechert, ed. The Dating of the Historical Buddha. Die Datierung des historischen Buddha. Symposien zur Buddhismusforschung. Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht in Göttingen. Ser. 3, vols. 189-190, 1991-1992.

parinirvāṇa of the Buddha. Calculating the last dot in this record to have been placed by Saṅghabhadra in 489 CE, Takakusu places the Buddha's *parinirvāṇa* in the year 486 BCE. This gives the year 414 CE as the equivalent of Paramārtha's 900 AN.

Takakusu's use of the Dotted Record in setting Paramārtha's date for Vasubandhu is problematic, not only because of possible questions regarding the accuracy of the Dotted Record, but because there is no evidence that this was the chronology that Paramārtha was using. For these reasons, Péri bases his interpretation of Paramārtha's date upon a passage attributed to Paramārtha by Hsüan-tsang's pupil P'u-kuang. In a commentary to the AK, P'u-kuang quotes Paramārtha as writing that 1,265 years have passed between the Buddha's *parinirvāṇa* and the present day. Péri suggests that Paramārtha was most likely to have written this statement between the years 563 and 569 CE, when he was working on the AK. He therefore calculates Paramārtha's date of 900 AN to be equivalent to the year 350 CE.[115]

A final problem exists regarding the date given by Paramārtha in his biography of Vasubandhu. The date as it appears in the Life uses a Chinese expression best translated as "in the nine-hundred years." It is not clear whether by this Paramārtha means the ninth century (801-900 AN), or the years numbering nine hundred (900-999 AN). Takakusu takes Paramārtha to mean the years numbering nine hundred.[116] Thus, according to him, Paramārtha places Vasubandhu somewhere in the range of 414-513 CE.

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115 Frauwallner agrees with Péri's methodology here, but since he takes the original date in Paramārtha's Life to be 1100 AN, he comes up with the year 400 CE (Frauwallner 1951b, pp. 7-10).

116 Takakusu, Jyan "The Date of Vasubandhu in the 'Nine Hundreds'" JRAS 1 (1914) pp. 1013-1014.

Appealing to the tradition that Vasubandhu lived for eighty years,[117] Takakusu gives the dates 420-500 CE for him. Péri, on the other hand, argues that the expression "in the nine-hundreds" signifies the ninth century AN, which gives the range 250-350 CE.[118] Thus, Péri arrives at the dates 270-350 CE for Vasubandhu.

Because of the discrepancies between traditional datings, and because of the ambiguity of these datings, scholars have sought further indications as to when Vasubandhu lived. Paramārtha's Life, in addition to citing dates for Vasubandhu, provides several pieces of indirect evidence as to when he lived. Of particular significance is Paramārtha's mention of two Gupta kings who were patrons of Vasubandhu. Paramārtha refers to these kings by their cognomens, Vikramāditya and Bālāditya.[119] Takakusu identifies Vikramāditya with Skandagupta (r. 452-480 CE), and Bālāditya with Narasiṃhagupta (r. 467-473). This identification has been generally accepted, despite the fact that it runs counter to certain details in Paramārtha's Life.[120]

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117 Takakusu, Jyan, trans. "The Life of Vasu-bandhu by Paramārtha (A.D. 499-569)." T'oung pao. Series 2, vol. 5. Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1904, p. 293.

118 Péri, pp. 355-356. O. Franke accepts and develops Péri's interpretation (Franke, O. "The Five Hundred and Nine Hundred Years." JRAS 1 (1914) pp. 398-401).

Frauwallner argues that the expression can be interpreted either way, and simply sticks to the year 1100 AN, which he interprets as 400 CE, without discussing the range of years indicated (Frauwallner 1951b, p. 9, n. 1).

119 Hsüan-tsang also mentions King Vikramāditya in association with Vasubandhu. He states that Vikramāditya oversaw the debate between a Sāṃkhya thinker and Vasubandhu's teacher, Manoratha. (Beal (1994) vol. 1, pp. 97-109.)

120 The identification of Vikramāditya and Bālāditya with Skandagupta and Narasiṃhagupta, respectively, was put forth independently by B. Liebich

In particular, two factors in the Life render Takakusu's identification questionable. First, Paramārtha states that Vikramāditya and Bālāditya were father and son, whereas Skandagupta and Narasiṃhagupta were uncle and nephew. Second, Paramārtha presents Bālāditya as directly succeeding Vikramāditya, whereas Narasiṃhagupta only succeeded Skandagupta after the rule of his father. Given these contradictions, scholars who date Vasubandhu prior to 400 CE have rejected Takakusu's identification, and have placed Vasubandhu under the reign of earlier Gupta rulers. The most convincing alternate suggestion, put forth by Anacker, identifies Vikramāditya with Candragupta II (r. 375-415), and Bālāditya with Govindagupta.[121] Anacker presents this proposal as the primary argument for placing Vasubandhu in the years 316-396 CE.

Scholars have appealed to a number of other Chinese sources which provide clues as to when Vasubandhu lived. The earliest concrete and undisputed indications of Vasubandhu's presence are the Chinese translations of his works, rendered by Bodhiruci in 508 CE.[122] This gives

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(Liebich, B. Das Datum Candragomin's und Kalidasa's Breslau, 1903; and Kṣīrataraṅginī, Kṣīrasvāmin's Kommentar zu Pāṇini's Dhātupātha Indische Forschungen Heft 8-9, Breslau 1930, pp. 268 ff).

This identification is also accepted by Frauwallner (1951b) p. 26.

K. B. Pathak agrees with these identifications but adds that Vasubandhu must also have been alive during the reign of Kumāragupta I (r. 414-455 CE) (Pathak, K.B. "Kumāragupta, The Patron of Vasubandhu." IA 40 (1911) p. 170 ff.; and "On Buddhamitra, the Teacher of Vasubandhu." IA 41 (1912) p. 244.

121 Anacker (1984) pp. 8-10. Anacker's analysis agrees with that of Bhandarkar (Bhandarkar, D. R. "Who was the Patron of Vasubandhu?" IA 41 (1912) 1-3).

Other scholars give still further opinions. V.A. Smith, for example, identifies the two rulers as Candragupta I and his son Samudragupta (Smith, V.A. The Early History of India. 3rd edition, Oxford, 1924, p. 347).

122 The Vajracchedikā-sūtra-śāstra (Nanjio 1168) was translated in 509 CE.

us a *terminus ante quem* for Vasubandhu. As for a *terminus ad quem*, that is more difficult to establish. Takakusu argues that since neither Kumārajīva (344-413 CE) nor Fa-hsien (fl. 399-414 CE) mention Vasubandhu, he must have not yet been living during their time.

Taiken Kimura, who agrees with Takakusu's dates for Vasubandhu, also tries to establish a date before which Vasubandhu could not have been living.[123] Kimura bases his argument on three Chinese translations of a work by Dharmatrāta which were completed around the year 430 CE.[124] Dharmatrāta's work was a revised version of the most popular Abhidharma text of the Vaibhāṣika school, the Abhidharmasāra.[125] Kimura argues that since Vasubandhu's AK is a further revision and development of the Abhidharmasāra, if any of the translators had had access to Vasubandhu's AK, they would have translated this newer and more developed work instead of Dharmatrāta's text. Since they did not translate Vasubandhu's AK, Kimura concludes, he must not have been around yet. Thus Kimura sets the *terminus ad quem* for Vasubandhu at the year 430 CE.[126]

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123 Kimura (1929).

124 Three translations of Dharmatrāta's work were done during the following dates: Fa-hsien (c. 397-418 CE), Īśvara (426-431 CE) and Saṃghavarman (434 CE).

125 The Abhidharmasāra is by Dharmaśrī (Taisho 1550, Nanjio 1288). Dharmatrāta's revision is entitled the Samyukta-abhidharma-hṛdaya (Taisho 1552, Nanjio 1289).

126 The evidence regarding Dharmatrāta's work is more complicated than Kimura's analysis reveals. In an introduction to his work, Dharmatrāta justifies his enterprise by saying that previous explanations of the Abhidharmasāra were insufficient. One of the Chinese translations of Dharmatrāta's work explains that Dharmatrāta was referring to a commentary by Vasubandhu on the Abhidharmasāra. While scholars who support an earlier date for Vasubandhu claim this as evidence, other scholars appeal to a statement by Hsüan-tsang's

In submitting dates for Vasubandhu which are later than those proposed by other scholars, both Takakusu and Kimura seek to establish events before which Vasubandhu could not have been living. Their attempts are problematic, however, in that they entail proofs by lack of evidence. Both Kimura and Takakusu argue that since evidence of Vasubandhu's presence does not exist in certain situations where we would expect him to be present, he must not have been living yet. Although this type of *argumentum ex silentio* may be suggestive, it can not be decisive, for there are always other possible explanations for the lack of evidence being sought. For example, as Frauwallner points out, it is quite plausible that Fa-hsien did not mention Vasubandhu simply because his primary interests were not literary or philosophical. (Fa-hsien traveled to India to get information about the *vinaya*.) It is true that in his travel log, he does not mention Vasubandhu, but, as Frauwallner points out, neither does he mention such thinkers as Nāgārjuna and Āryadeva, who clearly predated him.[127]

There is a further problem with Takakusu's assertion that Vasubandhu could not have predated Kumārajīva, for there are numerous indications that Kumārajīva knew of Vasubandhu, and was familiar with his work. Among the many Indian texts which Kumārajīva translated into Chinese are two works which were possibly written by Vasubandhu. The first of these texts, the Śataśāstra, was translated by Kumārajīva in 404 CE. Within this text, an attribution is made to "Vasu *k'ai che*." Scholars have debated whether this reference is to Vasubandhu.[128] The second text, the Bodhicittotpāda-śāstra,

pupil, Fu Kuang, that this reference is to an older Vasubandhu.

127 Frauwallner (1951) pp. 33-34, n. 2.

128 Some scholars say the reference is to a Vasu mentioned in earlier Mahāyāna texts. Péri shows numerous instances in which Vasu is used as a epithet of

was translated by Kumārajīva in 400 CE. Some traditional sources cite Vasubandhu as its author, while others ascribe it to Maitreya. Perhaps the strongest evidence that Vasubandhu predated Kumārajīva is found in a passage of a text written by Kumārajīva's pupil Seng-chao (384-414 CE).[129] In this passage, Seng-chao records Kumārajīva telling the story of how his teacher bequeathed to him a text by Vasubandhu and told him to diffuse it throughout China. Additional evidence lies in the fact that certain sources, such as the Kou kin yi king t'ou ki, record that Kumārajīva wrote a biography of Vasubandhu. However, no such biography exists today. Finally, a Sarvāstivādin list of patriarchs, which appears to have been compiled in the year 520 CE, places Vasubandhu well before the time of Kumārajīva.[130]

Although some of the above pieces of evidence can be called into question, taken together, they give us reason to suspect that Kumārajīva not only knew of Vasubandhu, but regarded him as an authoritative Buddhist teacher. If Vasubandhu did indeed predate Kumārajīva (344-413 CE), then Takakusu's dates of 420-500 CE for Vasubandhu would have to be pushed forward. Takakusu, however, does not address this problem. The only evidence regarding Kumārajīva which Takakusu mentions is the biography

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respect. In Kumārajīva's text, he says, the term is either being used as an epithet for Vasubandhu, or as an abbreviation of his name. Péri has shown that Vasu is also used to refer to Vasubandhu in the colophon of the Mahāyānasaṃgrahabhāṣya, as well as other places in Chinese sources (Péri pp. 373-376).

129 Frauwallner locates this passage in a post face to the translation of the Saddharmapuṇḍarīka-sūtra, which is preserved in Hui-hsiang's Fa hua ching chuan chi (Taisho 2068, ch. 2, p. 54b, 6 ff). (See Frauwallner (1951b) p. 35.)

130 Péri, p. 347.

which Kumārajīva is said to have written about Vasubandhu, and Takakusu simply rejects this attribution as a "mistake," without giving any further explanation.[131] Scholars who give an earlier date for Vasubandhu, on the other hand, take one or more of the pieces of evidence regarding Kumārajīva as proof that Vasubandhu must have lived prior to 385 CE, the year Kumārajīva arrived in China.[132]

In addition to the evidence relating to Kumārajīva, there are several references to Vasubandhu in other Chinese sources which may give an indication of when he lived. In the Chin-kang-sien-lun, a non-canonical commentary on the Vajracchedikā, a *paramparā* is given which includes Vasubandhu and continues up until the present time of the text. The number of people listed in the line of succession suggests a span of approximately two hundred years between Vasubandhu and the present time of the text. Since the text is said to have been translated by Bodhiruci in 535 CE,[133] this would place Vasubandhu in the midst of his career in 335 CE. While Péri and Ui take this as strong evidence regarding Vasubandhu's dates,

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131 Takakusu (1905a) p. 39; and (1929) p. 81.

132 Wayman interprets the evidence pertaining to Kumārajīva quite differently. Wayman argues against Frauwallner's theory of two Vasubandhus, saying that Frauwallner's elder Vasubandhu (the brother of Asaṅga and the author of early Yogācāra texts) is identical to the younger Vasubandhu (the author of the AK). At the same time, Wayman argues that the evidence pertaining to Kumārajīva shows that there were two Vasubandhus. The other Vasubandhu, according to Wayman, was an earlier thinker who belonged to the Mādhyamika school. He was the author of the Bodhicittotpādanaśāstra and a commentary of the Śataśāstra by Āryadeva. These texts are two of the three Madhyamaka works translated by Kumārajīva into Chinese, and which form the basis of the Chinese Madhyamaka school of San-lun (Wayman (1961) pp. 21-22).

133 This information is found in the title page of the text which was published in the supplement to the Tripiṭaka of Kyoto, 1st series, box 2 fascicle 3 (See Péri, p. 342.)

Takakusu argues that the text is a Chinese compilation, and thus rejects the *paramparā* as inauthentic.[134] Finally, the Fou fa tsang yin yuan tchouan,[135] a list of patriarchs translated in 472 CE, includes a "Vasubanda," followed by the names of three other patriarchs. While Péri accepts this as evidence that Vasubandhu lived three generations earlier than the year 472 CE, Takakusu argues that the reference here is not to Vasubandhu.[136]

In addition to providing evidence relating directly to Vasubandhu, Chinese sources also provide certain clues as to when Asaṅga lived. Asaṅga's MSA is mentioned within the body of a Chinese translation of the Mahāyānāvatāra-śāstra which was completed around the year 430 CE.[137] Even earlier than this, two portions of Asaṅga's Yogācārabhūmi were translated into Chinese: the Bodhisattva-bhūmy-ādhāra was translated by Dharmakṣa between the years 414-421 CE, and the Bodhisattva-bhadraśīla was translated by Guṇavarman in 421 CE. Based on the evidence of these translations, Unrai Wogihara has placed Asaṅga in 375-450 CE, and Vasubandhu in 390-470 CE.[138] Likewise, Lévi proposes that Asaṅga's

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134 Péri, pp. 341-344; Takakusu (1929) pp. 83-84.

135 Nanjio 1340.

136 Péri, p. 345; Takakusu (1904) p. 54 and also in (1905a) p. 40. See also Masppero, M. H. "Sur la Date et l'Authenticité du Fou fa tsang yin yuan tchouan." Mélanges d'Indianisme Offerts à Sylvain Lévi. Paris, 1910.

137 The Chinese title of the translation is Jou ta chen louen. (Nanjio no. 1243). The text is attributed to Sthiramati, although the validity of this attribution is doubtful.

138 Wogihara (1908). Wogihara bases these dates upon the fact that a portion of the Bodhisattvabhūmi was translated into Chinese by Dharmarakṣa between 414 and 421 CE.

activity covered the first half of the fifth century.[139] Takakusu, on the other hand, rejects all the above evidence, calling in as support the work of Ui, who argues that Maitreya was the author of these texts, and not Asaṅga.[140] Ui's work, however, does not necessarily support Takakusu's position, for although Ui attributes the authorship of the MSA and YBh to Maitreya, he suggests that Asaṅga compiled them. Ui's analysis, therefore, can also be seen to support the conclusion that Asaṅga must have been living before the translation of these texts.

In concluding the discussion of Vasubandhu's dates, I return to the issue of relative dating. The earliest dates proposed for Vasubandhu are Péri's dates of 270-350 CE. Assuming Vasubandhu was in the midst of his career at age fifty, and placing Nāgārjuna in the year 200 CE, this puts Vasubandhu writing one hundred twenty years after Nāgārjuna, and two hundred twenty years before Bhāvaviveka. The latest dates for Vasubandhu are those put forth by Takakusu and Kimura: 420-500 CE. If we accept these dates, this leaves two hundred ninety years between Nāgārjuna and Vasubandhu, and fifty years between Vasubandhu and Bhāvaviveka. Whether we accept the earliest or the latest dates for Vasubandhu, two facts which are of crucial importance to this dissertation are clearly established. First, Asaṅga and Vasubandhu postdated Nāgārjuna, making the question of whether they were writing in opposition or in continuity with him a valid one. Second, there was a period of time after the lives of Asaṅga and Vasubandhu during which a conflict could have arisen between later authors

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139 Lévi (1911) pp. 1-2.

140 Ui (1929) pp. 96-99.

of the Madhyamaka and Yogācāra such as Bhāvaviveka and Sthiramati.

We can go one step further and propose tentative dates for Asaṅga and Vasubandhu. Péri's dates are problematic in light of Paramārtha's claim that Vasubandhu received patronage from the Gupta rulers Vikramāditya and Bālāditya. Even if we accept Anacker's suggestion that the rulers in question were Candragupta II (r. 375-415) and Govindagupta, rather than the later kings Skandagupta (r. 452-480) and Narasiṃhagupta (r. 467-473), Péri's dates are too early for such an association to have been possible.[141]

At the other extreme, Takakusu's dates of 420-500 CE for Vasubandhu are almost certainly too late. There is sufficient evidence, including references to Vasubandhu by Kumārajīva, the *paramparā* given in the Chin-kang-sien-lun which places Vasubandhu around the year 335 CE, the Chinese list of patriarchs which places Vasubandhu three generations earlier than the year 472 CE, and references to Vasubandhu by Saṃghavarman in 434 CE, to suspect strongly that Vasubandhu lived considerably earlier than Takakusu proposes.

In order to fit in all the available pieces of evidence for Vasubandhu's dates, I propose the dates 320-400 CE, suggested by Ui[142] Accepting the Tibetan tradition that Vasubandhu was born one year after Asaṅga's

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141 Wogihara's dates of 390-470 CE for Vasubandhu also do not accord with the Gupta kings mentioned in Paramārtha's account. If we take the kings in question to be Candragupta II (r. 375-415), and Govindagupta, this means Vasubandhu would have been fifteen years at the beginning of their reign and twenty-five at the end. This is almost certainly too young to have gained enough renown to receive royal patronage. If we take the Gupta kings to be Skandagupta (r. 452-480) and Narasiṃhagupta (r. 467-473), this makes Vasubandhu seventy-seven at the beginning of their reign.

142 Anacker's dates of 316-396 CE for Vasubandhu are equally plausible.

ordination[143], this gives us the year of Asaṅga's birth as 305 CE. In terms of relative dating, this places Asaṅga and Vasubandhu roughly one hundred seventy years after Nāgārjuna, and one hundred seventy years before Bhāvaviveka.

[143] See Chattopadhyaya, Lama Chimpa Alaka. Tāranātha's History of Buddhism in India. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1990, p. 167.

Chapter 3
The Biographical Accounts of Asaṅga and Vasubandhu

I. Introduction

Having determined Asaṅga and Vasubandhu's relative position within the chronology of Madhyamaka and Yogācāra thought, we can begin to examine the early Yogācāra's relation to the Madhyamaka from an historical point of view. That is to say, we can begin to address the question of whether the early Yogācāra writers put themselves forward as a Buddhist philosophical school in opposition to Nāgārjuna's Madhyamaka. Although we do not have data which are sufficiently factual to constitute a strictly historical analysis regarding the arising of the Yogācāra, we do have depictions of how Buddhists viewed Asaṅga and Vasubandhu and their role in Buddhist history. These depictions, in the form of traditional biographical accounts, are valuable documents for the history of ideas. Together with a close investigation of Asaṅga and Vasubandhu's own writings (the subject of Chapter 4), they can provide some indication of the doxographical relation between the early Yogācāra writings and those of Nāgārjuna.

I begin this chapter by identifying the biographical sources regarding Asaṅga and Vasubandhu. Using these sources, I will then provide a sketch of the brother's lives. With this background complete, I will then examine their stories more closely, pointing out and discussing the religious conflicts contained therein, and identifying in particular between whom these conflicts existed. Next, I will assess the implications regarding the status of the Mahāyāna during the time of Asaṅga and Vasubandhu, drawing from the

biographical materials, as well as the models presented by modern scholars regarding the early stages of the Mahāyāna. At this point, the discussion will shift briefly from the question of ideological depictions to questions of historical fact. Here, I will draw some conclusions regarding the status of the Mahāyāna during the time of Asaṅga and Vasubandhu. Finally, I will identify the earliest evidence for the existence of a division between the Madhyamaka and Yogācāra schools, and draw some preliminary conclusions concerning the doxographical self-understanding of Asaṅga and Vasubandhu.

II. The Biographical Sources

The earliest biographical information regarding Asaṅga and Vasubandhu comes from the records of Buddhist monks who traveled between India and China. These monks, either Indian missionaries to China or Chinese pilgrims to India, endeavored to ensure the authenticity of the Buddhist Tradition as it spread eastward. As increasing portions of the Buddhist canon became available in Chinese translations, and as Chinese thinkers began to develop written commentaries on these texts, many Chinese Buddhists looked back to India as the source of scriptural authority.

In 546 CE, at the invitation of the Chinese emperor Wu of the Liang dynasty, the Indian Buddhist monk Paramārtha (499-569 CE) came to China.[144] Working under the patronage of various Chinese rulers,

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144 Paramārtha (the religious name of Kulanātha) was born in Ujjain, in the present-day state of Madhya Pradesh. Paramārtha greatly influenced the development of Chinese Buddhist traditions during the Sui (581-618 CE) and T'ang (618-907 CE) periods. In particular, he developed the She-lun school, which was based primarily on Vasubandhu's Mahāyānasaṃgrahabhāṣya (She

Paramārtha spent the rest of his life translating into Chinese the many Buddhist Sanskrit texts he had brought with him,[145] as well as composing The Life of Vasubandhu.[146] Paramārtha's Life is a particularly valuable source of information regarding the lives of Asaṅga and Vasubandhu, for it is the earliest biography available, as well as being the only complete biography of Vasubandhu which exists today.[147] Regarding the sources of Paramārtha's Life, we can not be certain. Paramārtha does not mention any sources upon which he based his Life of Vasubandhu, nor is there any other strong evidence that any earlier written accounts existed.[148] Nor is it possible that Paramārtha relied upon his own recollections of Vasubandhu,

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ta-sheng lun shih), a commentary on Asaṅga's compendium of Mahāyāna doctrine. Among the followers of Paramārtha's school were the emperor Wen, and later on, the famous pilgrim, Hsüan-tsang. Paramārtha's She-lun school had a strong influence on the T'ien-t'ai and Hua-yen schools, as well as the Fa-hsiang and Ch'an schools in China. He is credited with having introduced the Yogācāra school of Buddhism to China.

For more information on Paramārtha's life and thought, see Paul (1984).

145 Paramārtha translated into Chinese a number of early Yogācāra texts, including the Madhyāntavibhāga, the Viṃśatikā and Triṃśikā, the Mahāyānasaṃgraha together with Vasubandhu's commentary, and the Saptadaśabhūmikaśāstra portion of the Yogācārabhūmi. For a complete list of Paramārtha's translations, see Nanjio Catalogue, p. 423 (104-105).

146 Nanjio 1463. Translated by Takakusu (1904).

147 No separate biography of Asaṅga exists. One may have existed in China around the end of the 7th or beginning of the 8th century CE. Hui-Ying, a pupil of Fa-tsang, cites a biography of Asaṅga in his Ta fang kuang fu hua yen ching kan ying chuan (Taisho 2074, p. 173b 8ff). (From Frauwallner (1951b) p. 47).

148 Chinese sources say that a Life of Vasubandhu, the twenty-first patriarch, was written by Kumārajīva in 409 CE. However, no such text exists today, nor is it clear that there ever was such a text (See Takakusu, 1905a, p. 39; and Beal(1994) vol. 1, p. 168, n. 9).

since he postdated him by almost one century.[149] The most likely possibility is that Paramārtha based his biography of Vasubandhu on his own recollections of stories circulating in India which he later recorded while living in China.[150]

The next biographical data we have regarding Asaṅga and Vasubandhu come from one of Paramārtha's many admirers, the Chinese pilgrim Hsüan-tsang (596-664 CE).[151] Hsüan-tsang traveled through India from 629 to 645, recording details about the many Buddhist sites he visited, as well as collecting relics, statues, and numerous Mahāyāna *sūtras* and

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149 This calculation is based upon the dates 320-400 CE for Vasubandhu, which I have suggested in the Chap. 2, Sect. 4. Even if we accept the latest dates proposed for Vasubandhu, Paramārtha would have only been one year old when Vasubandhu died.

150 At the end of Paramārtha's biography of Vasubandhu there is a note written by an unknown hand which states, "From the beginning as far as here the narrative refers to Vasubandhu and his brothers. Hereafter it records the travel of the *ācārya* of the Tripiṭaka (i.e. Paramārtha himself) from the capital of Tai-chou to the east, and thence to Kwang Chou (Canton), where he re-translated the Mahāyāna works, and it records also the incidents after his death, in order to hand them down to subsequent ages."

Takakusu notes that although this addendum indicates that the biography as we have it is not the original form of the work, it also suggests the likelihood that "Paramārtha is not the translator of an already existing biography of Vasubandhu, but a narrator of what he himself remembered or heard of Vasubandhu and his time"(Takakusu (1904) p. 203, n. 110; see also Takakusu (1905a) p. 38).

151 Regarding the question of Hsüan-tsang's chronology, see Lo, Hsiang-lin. "*Hsüan-tsang Fa- shih nien-tai k'so*" with an English summary in Journal of Oriental Studies 3 (1956) 34-47.

A biography of Hsüan-tsang was written by his contemporaries Hui-li and Yen-tsung. For a translation of this work see Samuel Beal's The Life of Hiuen-Tsiang by Hwui Li with an Introduction Containing an Account of the Works of I-tsing. London: K. Paul, Trench, Trubner, 1911; and Li, Yung-hsi, The Life of Hsüan-tsang, Chinese Buddhist Association of the People's Republic of China: Peking, 1959.

other Buddhist works.[152] When he returned to China, Hsüan-tsang devoted his time to translating the many Mahāyāna texts he had gathered in India. In addition, he composed a travel log, entitled Record of Western Realms (Ta-T'ang hsi-yü chi), which he presented to the T'ang emperor in 648 CE. Hsüan-tsang's travel log is a valuable source of information regarding the religious landscape of India during the early seventh century, as well as the general history of Buddhism in India. His accounts include details of the lives of Asaṅga and Vasubandhu which he learned as he passed through the places in which they lived.

In addition to the records of pilgrims traveling between India and China, the histories of Buddhism which were compiled by Tibetan Buddhist monks provide modern scholars with details regarding the lives of Asaṅga and Vasubandhu, as well as a general depiction of the religious landscape of India during their lifetimes. Although the Tibetan histories were written at a much later date than the other biographical sources, they have been influential in shaping current conceptions of Asaṅga and Vasubandhu. One of the earliest histories of Buddhism was composed by Bu-ston (1290-1364 CE). At age thirty, Bu-ston became the head of the Zwa-lu monastery, and while serving this post he wrote his History of Buddhism (*Chos-'byung*).[153] His History is divided into four chapters: a

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152 For a list of the works Hsüan-tsang is said to have brought back to China, see Watters vol. 1, p. 21.

During his stay in India, Hsüan-tsang studied under Śīlabhadra (c. 529-645 CE), who had succeeded Dharmapāla as master of Nālandā. Śīlabhadra taught Hsüan-tsang Dharmapāla's interpretation of Yogācāra doctrine, which Hsüan-tsang subsequently introduced to China. These teachings became known in China as the Fa-hsiang school, and eventually supplanted Paramārtha's She-lun school.

153 For more information regarding Bu-ston, see Ruegg, D.S. The Life of Bu ston

review of all of Buddhist literature that has been preserved in Tibet; the history of Buddhism in India; the history of Buddhism in Tibet; and a systematic catalogue of works, authors and translators of all literature in the *Bka'-'gyur* and *Bstan-'gyur* collections. His account of Asaṅga and Vasubandhu is contained within a section of the History which sketches the biographies of numerous Buddhist teachers such as Nāgārjuna, Āryadeva, Candragomin, Candrakīrti, Sthiramati, Dignāga, Dharmakīrti, etc.

The final source from which I will draw is that of the Tibetan Buddhist monk, Tāranātha (Tibetan name *Kun-dg'asnying-po*). Tāranātha was born in 1575 CE, and compiled a history of the Buddhist Tradition in 1608 CE. He entitled the work dGos-'dod-kun 'byung (That Which Fulfills All Desires), but it is generally referred to as Rgya-gar-chos-'byun (The History of Buddhism in India).[154] Tāranātha's chosen title makes clear that he viewed the history as more than a recounting of events, but as auspicious in itself. In composing his history he relied upon written materials and reports from Indian Buddhist monks who had come to Tibet.[155] Tāranātha's

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Rin po che: With the Tibetan Text of the Bu ston rNam thar. Rome: Instituto Italiano Serie Orientale Roma, vol. 34, 1966.

154 Chattopadhyaya's translation of Tāranātha's History is based primarily upon a 1946 edition prepared in Potala, and also the first letter-press edition of the Tibetan text, edited by A. Schiefner and published in St. Petersburg in 1868.

155 Regarding the sources of his History, Tāranātha says,

"I have not written anything except that which is absolutely authentic. I have gone through the work containing two thousand verses complied by *paṇḍita* Kṣemendrabhadra of Magadha in which is narrated the history of the incidents up to the period of king Rāmapāla. Besides, I have listened to some *paṇḍita* teachers [of India]. I have followed here mainly all these and have moreover read the work called the *Buddhapurāṇa* containing one thousand and two hundred verses and composed by the Kṣatriya *paṇḍita* Indradatta. In this are exhaustively mentioned the incidents of the period up to the four Sena kings. The account of the successions of the *ācārya-s* by the *brāhmaṇa paṇḍita* Bhaṭaghaṭi is similar in length. I have extensively used here both these works.

History is organized into chapters about individual royal or religious figures or events which were of particular importance in the development of the Buddhist tradition. He devotes one chapter to the brothers Asaṅga and Vasubandhu.[156]

III. A Sketch of the Brothers' Lives

I turn now to sketch the life of Asaṅga, and then that of his brother, Vasubandhu. In sketching the biographies of Asaṅga and Vasubandhu, I will draw primarily from the earliest and most complete source, Paramārtha's Life of Vasubandhu, noting other sources when they differ from Paramārtha's account. Asaṅga was born in Gāndhāra, in the village of Puruṣapura (modern Peshawar). His father was a brahman priest from the Kauśika family.[157] Following Indian tradition of the time, Asaṅga's parents

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These three authorities are practically unanimous excepting on certain minor points related to the dates of the different individuals..... The accounts of the different incidents of the later periods [given by me] have not come down in writing. In spite of being transmitted only orally, these are authentic. I have also included here the narratives from The Garland of Flowers" (Chattopadhyaya, pp. 350-351.)

156 There are also two later Tibetan biographies of Vasubandhu. The byan chub lam gyi rim pa'i bla ma brgyud pa'i rnam par thar pa padma dkar po'i 'phren ba, written by the second Panchen Lama, Blo bzang ye shes (1663-1737 CE), and the Byang chub lam gyi rim pa'i bla ma brgyud pa'i rnam par thar pa gyal bstan mdzes pa'i rgyan mchog phul byung nor bui phreng ba, written by ye 'ses rgyal mtshan (1713-1792 CE). The former biographical sketch is copied almost *verbatim* from Bu-ston. The latter work also draws from Bu-ston, while also including elements from Tāranātha. For a study of these works, see Marek Mejor's "A Contribution to the Biography of Vasubandhu from Tibetan Sources" in Tibetan and Buddhist Studies Commemorating the 200th Anniversary of the Birth of Alexander Csoma de Korös. Louis Ligetti, ed. vol. 2. Buddhapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1984, 159-173.

157 The other biographies do not identify Asaṅga's father as a priest, although

gave their three sons the same name at birth, and only later gave them a second, individual name. All three brothers were first given the name Vasubandhu. The eldest brother became known as Asaṅga, the middle brother kept the name Vasubandhu, and the youngest brother took the name Viriñcivatsa.

All three brothers entered the Sarvāstivāda order when they were young, but the only one who would remain there was the youngest brother, Viriñcivatsa. Each of the three brothers achieved great success among the Sarvāstivādins. Asaṅga, however, had difficulty in comprehending the doctrine of emptiness. After grappling with it without success, he was about to commit suicide when the *arhat* Piṇḍola intervened by traveling all the way from Pūrvavideha and teaching him the Hīnayāna interpretation of the doctrine of emptiness. Asaṅga quickly learned what Piṇḍola had to teach, but he still was not satisfied.[158] Using the meditative techniques he had learned within the Hīnayāna, Asaṅga ascended to Tuṣita heaven to enlist the help of the Bodhisattva Maitreya. Thereupon, Maitreya taught him the

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Tāranātha says he was a *brāhmaṇa* versed in the three Vedas (Chattopadhyaya p. 167). Bu-ston and Tāranātha record that Asaṅga and Vasubandhu had different fathers but the same mother (named Prasannaśīlā in Bu-ston and Prakāśaśīlā in Tāranātha.) In these Tibetan accounts, Asaṅga's father is a *kṣatriya*, and Vasubandhu's is a *brāhmaṇa*.

158 This is a common trope among the biographies of early Mahāyāna thinkers. In the biography of Nāgārjuna, for example, we are told that Nāgārjuna mastered the Tripiṭaka in ninety days, but was not completely satisfied until Mahānāga Bodhisattva revealed to him the Prajñāpāramitā-sūtra. In narratives such as these, the heroes can be seen as embodying, in idealized form, a Mahāyāna version of the development of the Buddhist tradition: Their individual spiritual development mirrors the history of the revelation of the Buddha's teachings. First the Hīnayāna is introduced, but it is seen as incomplete. It is regarded as valuable in that it prepares one for the teachings of the Mahāyāna, but it is only through the subsequent teachings of the Mahāyāna that full spiritual attainment is said to be reached.

Mahāyāna version of the doctrine of emptiness. After having fully comprehended the doctrine of emptiness he returned to earth, and took on the name A-saṅga (meaning without attachment).[159]

The Tibetan sources give a more detailed account of Asaṅga's quest to meet Maitreya. According to Tāranātha, Asaṅga, unsuccessful in his attempts to penetrate the meaning of the Prajñāpāramitā-sutras, entered a cave and began to propitiate Maitreya in the hopes of gaining his help.[160] After meditating for three years without any sign of success, Asaṅga came out of the cave in frustration. As he looked around him, he noticed some stones which in the course of time had been worn down by the wings of birds, even though these wings only brushed the stones twice a day: once in the morning when the birds left their nests on the rocks, and once when they returned at night. Seeing his own impatience in contrast to this, Asaṅga returned to the cave, determined to persevere until he had attained a vision of Maitreya. After another three years, disheartened by his continued lack of success, Asaṅga left the cave again. This time, he saw stones which had been eroded by drops of water. Realizing again his lack of patience, he returned to the cave and continued his efforts. Three more years passed without success, and Asaṅga came out of the cave again, this time seeing an old man rubbing a piece of iron with a cotton cloth. The old man explained that he was making fine needles out of the piece of iron, and he showed

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159 The Chinese translation is *wou tcho*, or *wu cho* (without attachment). The Tibetan translation of Asaṅga is *thogs (pa) med* (without obstruction).

160 Haribhadra (8th century) also states that Asaṅga had difficulties in understanding the Prajñāpāramitā-sūtras, and that Maitreya explained to him their meaning. (Abhiṣamayālamkārālokā as quoted in Wogihara (1932-36) 75:23ff; and in Mejor (1991) pp. 47-48).

Asaṅga a box of needles he had already made in this way. Asaṅga returned to the cave for another three years.[161]

After trying for a total of twelve years without success, Asaṅga came out of the cave for good. He traveled on foot to a city.[162] There he saw an injured dog with a festering wound which was infested with maggots. The sight filled him with compassion. He realized that if he removed the maggots, they would die. At the same time, he saw that if he did not remove the maggots, the dog would die. In order to save both the maggots and the dog, he decided to cut a piece of flesh from his own body, thus giving the maggots nourishment while also freeing the dog of infestation. He bought a shaving razor, and slashed his leg. As he reached out for the maggots, to his astonishment, the dog disappeared and in its stead stood the Bodhisattva Maitreya. Maitreya explained to Asaṅga that he had been with him all along, but that the obstructions resulting from Asaṅga's karma had prevented him from seeing Maitreya. Only this act of great compassion finally cleared Asaṅga's vision. Now that Maitreya was accessible to Asaṅga, he asked Asaṅga what he desired. Asaṅga replied that he wished to spread the Mahāyāna. Thereupon, Maitreya brought him up to Tuṣita heaven, where he taught him the Mahāyāna doctrine in its entirety, as well as the meaning of the whole collection of *sūtras* and the "Five Works of Maitreya."[163]

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161 Bu-ston's account is virtually the same as that of Tāranātha, although he only records two visions which Asaṅga saw upon leaving the cave: that of an old man making needles out of an iron pole by rubbing it with a piece of cotton, and that of rocks worn away by drops of water and the wings of birds (Obermiller, E. "The History of Buddhism (Chos-hbyung) by Bu-ston." Materialien zur Kunde des Buddhismus. 1931-1932. Part 2, pp. 137-138).

162 Bu-ston identifies the city as Acinta (Obermiller (1931-1932) Part 2, p. 138).

163 These five works, according to Tibetan tradition, are the Abhisamayālamkāra, DDV, Madhyāntavibhāga, Mahāyānasūtrālamkāra, and Ratnagotravibhāga.

According to all the sources, after having been taught the Mahāyāna by Maitreya in Tuṣita heaven, Asaṅga returned to earth to spread what he had learned. Paramārtha records that Asaṅga's first attempts to propagate the Mahāyāna were unsuccessful. Frustrated that people did not believe him, Asaṅga implored Maitreya to descend to earth himself and convince people of the validity of the Mahāyāna teachings. Maitreya consented. He came down at night to a vast lecture hall and began to recite the *sūtra* of the Saptadaśabhūmis.[164] Maitreya recited stanzas every evening for four months until he taught the entire *sūtra*. During his lectures, Maitreya was accessible only to Asaṅga. To everyone else in the audience, he only could be heard as if from afar. It was therefore up to Asaṅga to explain Maitreya's teachings for the benefit of others.

In Tāranātha's account, the story of Asaṅga's initial presentation of Maitreya's teachings is followed by a description of his great success in spreading the Mahāyāna. Tāranātha tells us that Asaṅga built a forest *vihāra*, and gathered there eight disciples. During his stay at the *vihāra*, he transcribed the five texts of Maitreya and wrote a number of his own works. Later, he moved to a monastery in the city of Sagari, where a great number of monks gathered to hear him teach. To this vast assembly, Asaṅga taught the Śrāvaka *piṭakas* as well as the Mahāyāna *sūtras*. Asaṅga's fame as a master of the Mahāyāna spread until eventually the King Gambhīrapakṣa heard of his great learning and decided to judge his abilities himself. The King devised a test which included six questions regarding the Prajñāpāramitā-sūtra. Three of the questions required Asaṅga to identify

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(Regarding the authorship of these texts, see above, Chap. 2, Sect. II.)

164 (i.e., the Yogācārabhūmi).

passages in the text, and three required him to explain the meaning of key ideas in the text.[165] The king was impressed with Asaṅga's answers, and rewarded him by giving funds for the establishment of twenty-five centers of the Mahāyāna, each of which accommodated one hundred male monks and a large number of female monks. In addition to this, Asaṅga had numerous *caityas* and temples built, and established numerous centers of Dharma with his own resources. Among these great deeds, perhaps his greatest accomplishment is to have converted to the Mahāyāna his brother Vasubandhu, whose biography I turn to now.

According to the Tāranātha, Vasubandhu[166] was born a year after his brother Asaṅga's ordination. The Tibetan sources record that Asaṅga and Vasubandhu had different fathers but the same mother, named Prasannaśīlā in Bu-ston and Prakāśaśīlā in Tāranātha. The Tibetan sources credit Asaṅga and Vasubandhu's mother with a great influence upon her sons' religious careers. They record that she performed rituals so that her sons might be endowed with superior intelligence. She made sure they were well educated,

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165 It should be noted that the purpose of these questions was to test Asaṅga's ability to read others' thoughts. The king did not ask Asaṅga the questions out loud, but merely thought them to himself. Tāranātha remarks on Asaṅga's ability to read minds several times, as well as mentioning his ability to travel great distances in very short periods of time (see, for example Chattopadhyaya, pp. 159, 164, 165). The importance of these abilities seems to lie in their connection to Asaṅga's capacity as a teacher. The ability to read minds allows him to answer his students' questions and doubts directly, while the ability to travel rapidly allows him to spread his teachings to a much wider audience than a normal rate of travel would allow.

166 Tibetan *dbyig-gnen*. Although the generally accepted meaning of Vasubandhu is teacher of law, Bu-ston explains the meaning of the name as follows: "He was possessed of the wealth (*vastu*) of the Highest Wisdom and, having propagated the Doctrine out of mercy, had become the friend (*bandhu*) of the living beings" (Obermiller (1931-1932) Part 2, p. 145).

and when it came time for them to seek a profession, she encouraged them to enter the monastic order, rather than following their fathers' professions.[167]

Paramārtha begins his account of Vasubandhu by naming Buddhamitra as his teacher.[168] He writes that Buddhamitra faced a formidable heretical opponent, a Sāṃkhya thinker, who defeated him in philosophical debate. Vasubandhu, by that time, had established himself as a first-class scholar and proponent of the Hīnayāna. When he heard of his teacher's defeat, he sought the heretic to face him in debate and to reclaim his teacher's honor. When Vasubandhu managed to trace the heretic down, however, he found that he had already died. Having missed the opportunity to debate his opponent, Vasubandhu instead composed a treatise entitled the "Truth-Seventy" in which he thoroughly refuted Sāṃkhya doctrine.[169] Hearing of Vasubandhu's great feat, the king Vikramāditya rewarded him with gold. Vasubandhu divided his prize into three equal parts with which he had three monasteries built in Ayodhyā: one for female monks, one for the Sarvāstivāda school, and one for the Mahāyāna school.

Like his brothers, Vasubandhu began his religious career as a member of the Sarvāstivāda (also called the Vaibhāṣika after their authoritative texts, the Vibhāṣā). After Vasubandhu had mastered the principles of the Vibhāṣā, he began to teach them to the public. Each day, he would present a lecture, and then compose a verse which summarized the lesson. He would have the

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167 Chattopadhyaya, p. 155; Obermiller (1931-1932) Part 2, pp. 136-137.

168 Hsüan-tsang names Manoratha as Vasubandhu's teacher, and does not mention Buddhamitra.

169 The Sanskrit title of this text, Paramārthasapati, is reconstructed from the Chinese. For a discussion on the identity of this text, see Takakusu (1905a) pp. 47-50.

verse engraved on a copper plate, and hang the verse from the head of an intoxicated elephant. Then, beating on a drum, he would shout out, challenging anyone to try to refute the principles set forth in the verse. Vasubandhu did this each day until he composed more than 600 verses containing all the doctrines of the Vibhāṣā. The collection of these verses makes up the verse section of the AK.

When Vasubandhu had completed the verses, he sent them along with fifty pounds of gold to Kashmir, where the Vibhāṣā masters were residing. The masters were delighted with the work. Vasubandhu's writing, however, was so abstruse that even the masters could not understand some of the verses. They therefore sent back Vasubandhu's fifty pounds of gold, along with an additional fifty, and requested that he write an explanation of the verses. Thereupon Vasubandhu composed a prose commentary (*bhāṣya*) upon the AK. This commentary, although ostensibly written from the viewpoint of the Sarvāstivāda, often ended up revealing shortcomings in the doctrines of this school, and promoting Sautrāntika interpretations instead. Vasubandhu sent the completed prose commentary on the AK to the Vibhāṣā masters, who upon seeing their own opinions therein refuted, were greatly distressed.[170]

As Vasubandhu's reputation as a gifted scholar began to grow, he gained the position of teacher to the prince Bālāditya and his mother, the Queen.[171] When Bālāditya became king, he invited Vasubandhu to settle in Ayodhyā and receive royal patronage. Vasubandhu accepted. While

170 Takakusu (1904) p. 288.

171 For a discussion regarding the identity of the Gupta King Bālāditya (and his father Vikramāditya), see above, n. 20.

Vasubandhu was at court, the king's brother-in-law, who was well versed in grammatical treatises, challenged Vasubandhu to debate. Appealing to the principles of the Vyākarana, he criticized Vasubandhu's AK from a grammatical point of view.[172] Through his critique, the king's brother-in-law sought to destroy Vasubandhu's work. Vasubandhu responded to the attack by beginning a careful study of the Vyākaraṇa treatise. Only after he had learned it thoroughly did he compose a work refuting the entire treatise. For this achievement, the King and Queen-mother honored him with a gift of gold. Vasubandhu used the gold to build three temples: one in Puruṣapura, one in Kashmir and one in Ayodhyā.

Meanwhile, the king's brother-in-law, infuriated by his defeat, invited the Buddhist priest Saṅghabhadra to come to Ayodhyā to compose a refutation of Vasubandhu's AK. Saṅghabhadra took up the task, and compiled two *śāstras* which defended the Sarvāstivāda teachings against Vasubandhu's work.[173] He then invited Vasubandhu to meet in person for a decisive debate. Vasubandhu, although he knew that Saṅghabhadra's writings did not succeed in overthrowing the doctrine of the AK, did not want to meet. Claiming to be too old and weary of debate, Vasubandhu replied to Saṅghabhadra that since they had each written down their views,

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172 Paramārtha describes the particular Vyākarana here as a grammar consisting of 32 chapters. Takakusu suggests that the text referred to is a grammar by Candragomin. However, Paramārtha's description seems to indicate that the text was Pāṇini's Grammar. (Takakusu (1905a) pp. 45n).

173 Paramārtha describes these two texts as the Samaya of Light, containing 10,000 verses explaining the doctrines of the Vibhāṣā, and the Conformity to the Truth (Satyānusāra or Nyāyānusāra) containing 120,000 verses and refuting the Abhidharmakośa in favor of the Vibhāṣā (Takakusu (1904) p. 289). For a further discussion regarding the identity of these texts, see Takakusu (1905a) p. 46.

people could decide for themselves who was right.

In contrast to his pacific behavior toward Saṅghabhadra, Vasubandhu continued to launch virulent attacks on the Mahāyāna. Asaṅga, knowing his brother's great skill and learning, greatly feared that he would compose a treatise which would destroy the Mahāyāna. At that time, Asaṅga was living in Puruṣapura.[174] He sent a messenger to Ayodhyā to tell Vasubandhu that he was seriously ill and needed to be attended to quickly. Vasubandhu immediately followed the messenger back to Puruṣapura to see his brother. Upon seeing Asaṅga in apparently good health, Vasubandhu asked him what the matter was. Asaṅga replied that he was indeed ill, and that the illness was due to his fear that Vasubandhu's wickedness in attacking the Mahāyāna would result in Vasubandhu's terrible rebirth.

Vasubandhu was alarmed at his brother's words, and asked him for a concise explanation of the essential principles of the Mahāyāna. Upon hearing his brother's account, Vasubandhu became convinced that the teaching of the Mahāyāna excelled even that of the Hīnayāna. Asaṅga then fully taught Vasubandhu the principles of the Mahāyāna. As he came to understand the Mahāyāna, Vasubandhu became filled with remorse and shame for having derided the Mahāyāna. Fearing he would fall into a miserable rebirth of his past wickedness, Vasubandhu resolved to cut out his tongue which had once maligned the Mahāyāna. Hearing this, Asaṅga told his brother that even if he cut out his tongue a thousand times, he could not wipe out his crime. He told Vasubandhu that the way to atone for his

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174 Hsüan-tsang and Paramārtha differ in their geographical details: according to Paramārtha, Vasubandhu composed the Abhidharmakośa in Ayodhyā and was converted to the Mahāyāna in Puruṣapura. Hsüan-tsang, on the other hand, places Vasubandhu's composition of the Abhidharmakośa in the outskirts of Puruṣapura, and his conversion in Ayodhyā.

offense was to propound the Mahāyāna as skillfully and effectively as he had once attacked it. Vasubandhu heeded his brother's advice, and devoted the rest of his life to propagating the Mahāyāna. He died in Ayodhyā at the age of eighty.[175]

IV. Religious Conflicts in the Biographies

All the biographical accounts depict Asaṅga and Vasubandhu as having been surrounded by and involved in religious competition and conflict. Frictions are evident in the general descriptions of the historical period in northern India, as well as in specific details of the brothers' own lives, such as their involvement in debates and their changing affiliations within the Buddhist Tradition. A close investigation of these conflicts reveals the divisions which the biographers saw to exist within the Buddhist tradition during the time of Asaṅga and Vasubandhu. In particular, it tells us the groups between which they identify divisions, along what lines they draw these divisions, and the relative importance they assign these divisions. In turn, the investigation of the conflicts within the biographies serves to elucidate the nature of the conflict, if indeed there was any, between the early Yogācāra and the Madhyamaka schools. Three types of religious conflict can be found in all the biographical sources: between Buddhists and non-Buddhists, between factions of the Hīnayāna, and between the Hīnayāna and the Mahāyāna. I will focus upon the latter two, intra-Buddhist disputes.

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175 Hsüan-tsang tells a story regarding Vasubandhu's rebirth in Maitreya's heavenly abode which suggests that Vasubandhu outlived Asaṅga (Beal (1994) vol. 1, pp. 227-228; Watters, vol. 1, pp. 357-358). This contradicts all the other sources.

Indications of a conflict between factions of the Hīnayāna appear with varying degree in all the sources. This conflict is presented most dramatically in the story of Vasubandhu's changing affiliation from the Sarvāstivāda to the Sautrāntika point of view. In Paramārtha's account, as we saw above, when Vasubandhu first composed the verses of the AK, the Vaibhāṣika masters applauded his presentation of Sarvāstivāda doctrine. When he subsequently composed a commentary on the verses, however, the Vaibhāṣikas were greatly dismayed, for this time he seemed to refute many Sarvāstivāda doctrines in favor of those held by the Sautrāntikas. According to Paramārtha, the conflict between Vasubandhu and the Sarvāstivādins did not end here. Paramārtha records that Saṅghabhadra composed two Sarvāstivāda texts attacking the Abhidharmakośabhāṣya, and challenged Vasubandhu to a face-to-face debate.

Hsüan-tsang gives a similar account of the conflict between Saṅghabhadra and Vasubandhu, and supplies several additional details. According to Hsüan-tsang, when Vasubandhu refused Saṅghabhadra's invitation to debate, he explained to his disappointed disciples that he was not declining out of fear, but because Saṅghabhadra would merely ridicule him for being old, and the people of the area, who did not possess profound insight, would easily be convinced of Vasubandhu's defeat. Instead, Vasubandhu said, he should meet Saṅghabhadra in central India, where, in the presence of wise men, they could debate and the winner be chosen. Although Saṅghabhadra wished to accept the invitation, he grew gravely ill and could not pursue Vasubandhu.[176] Knowing his death was near, Saṅghabhadra wrote the following letter to Vasubandhu:

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176 Beal (1994) vol. 1, p. 194; Watters, vol. 1, p. 325.

> The Tathāgata having died, the different schools of his followers adopted and arranged their distinctive teaching; and each had its own disciples without hindrance. They favoured those of their own way of thinking; they rejected (persecuted) others. I, who possess but a weak understanding, unhappily inherited this custom from my predecessors, and coming to read your treatise called the Abhidharma-kosha, written to overthrow the great principles of the masters of the Vibhāshika school, abruptly, without measuring my strength, after many years' study have produced this *śāstra* to uphold the teaching of the orthodox school. My wisdom indeed is little, my intentions great. My end is now approaching. If the Bodhisattva (Vasubandhu), in spreading abroad his subtle maxims and disseminating his profound reasonings, will vouchsafe not to overthrow my production, but will let it remain whole and entire for posterity, then I shall not regret my death.[177]

Saṅghabhadra dispatched one of his disciples with the letter, telling him, "I, who am but a scholar of poor ability, have aspired to surpass one of highest natural talent.... [M]ake my excuses to that Bodhisattva, and assure him of my repentance."[178] According to Hsüan-tsang, Vasubandhu respected the dying request of Saṅghabhadra, and did not compose a refutation of his treatise, even though he could have easily done so.

The Tibetan accounts present a significantly different picture of the

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177 Beal (1994) vol. 1, p. 194; Watters, vol. 1, p. 325.

178 Beal (1994) vol. 1, p. 195; Watters, vol. 1, p. 326.

relation between Saṅghabhadra and Vasubandhu. Rather than portraying Saṅghabhadra as a younger contemporary who assiduously opposed Vasubandhu and wrote a treatise to refute his views, they depict him as senior to Vasubandhu, and as a prominent thinker in his own right. Indeed, according to Tāranātha and Bu-ston, Saṅghabhadra was Vasubandhu's teacher. Tāranātha tells us that when Vasubandhu traveled to Kashmir as a young monk, he studied the Abhidharma and views of the eighteen schools under Saṅghabhadra. After Vasubandhu had returned to Ayodhyā, he composed the AK and sent Saṅghabhadra a copy. Saṅghabhadra was pleased with his pupil's work. But soon afterwards, when he saw Vasubandhu's commentary, Saṅghabhadra was gravely disappointed, and came to Magadha to argue with him. Vasubandhu, however, had already left for Nepal, so no debate took place.[179] Before discussing further the difference between the two Tibetan accounts and the two earlier accounts in their representation of the conflict within the Hīnayāna, I turn to examine the conflict between the Hīnayāna and the Mahāyāna.

As with the conflict between factions of the Hīnayāna, the conflict between the Hīnayāna and the Mahāyāna is manifest in the brothers' own changing religious affiliations. According to the two earlier accounts, Asaṅga was first a member of the Hīnayāna: Paramārtha states that Asaṅga was ordained in the Sarvāstivāda order, and Hsüan-tsang says that he was a

179 Tāranātha specifies that this part of his account is from Tibetan sources. He adds that the Indian accounts do not state clearly that Saṅghabhadra came to Magadha, and that if he did indeed go there, it must have been earlier, because by the time of Vasubandhu's departure for Nepal, Saṅghabhadra had already been dead for many years (Chattopadhyaya, pp. 174-175). Cf. Bu-ston's account (Obermiller (1931-1932) Part 2, pp. 137, 142, 144-145).

disciple of the Mahīśāsaka order.[180] Paramārtha attributes Asaṅga's change in affiliation to a dissatisfaction with the Hīnayāna teaching of emptiness. If we accept Paramārtha's explanation, this tells us two important details about the relation between the Hīnayāna and the Mahāyāna during the time of Asaṅga and Vasubandhu: first, that there was a particular understanding of emptiness which was associated specifically with Hīnayāna as opposed to Mahāyāna doctrine; and second that this doctrinal difference was a significant point of difference between the two movements.[181]

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180 Beal (1994) vol. 1, p. 226; Watters, vol. 1, p. 357.

These two pieces of information are not contradictory, since the Mahīśāsaka was a subsect of the Sarvāstivāda. Modern scholars have supported Hsüan-tsang's report that Asaṅga was a member of the Mahīśāsaka order. See especially Alex Wayman's "Doctrinal Affiliation of the Buddhist Master Asaṅga" in *Amala Prajñā: Aspects of Buddhist Studies*. N.H. Samtani, ed. Bibliotheca Indo-Buddhica no. 63 Delhi: Sri Satguru Publications, 1989. Wayman's argument has recently been supported by André Bareau in Researches in Indian and Buddhist Philosophy: Essays in Honour of Professor Alex Wayman. Ram Karan Sharma, ed. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1993. See also Anacker (1984) p. 58.

It is difficult to assess the influence which Asaṅga's affiliation with the Mahīśāsakas had upon his later thought, for there exists little information concerning this order. One of the few details which is known about the Mahīśāsakas is that they placed a strong emphasis upon meditative training. This emphasis appears to have carried over into Asaṅga's later writings, a large part of which are devoted to establishing a philosophical basis for the practice of meditation.

Epigraphical records tell us that the Mahīśāsaka order was present at Nāgārjunakoṅda as early as the third century CE. During the time of Asaṅga and Vasubandhu, the Chinese pilgrim Fa-hsien records that the Mahīśāsaka had spread all the way to Śri Lanka (where he found a copy of their Vinayapiṭaka). According to two *sūtric* sources (Taisho 397, p. 26b and 1470, p. 926a), the Mahīśāsakas were distinguished by their blue robes and by their skill at meditation (*dhyāna*). By the year 670 CE, the Chinese Buddhist pilgrim I-ching records that the Mahīśāsaka had died out in India (Bareau, André. Les Sectes Bouddhiques de Petit Véhicule. Saigon: École Française D'Extrême-Orient, 1955, pp. 181-182).

181 Paramārtha's suggestion of a conflict between Hīnayāna and Mahāyāna

A more general conflict between the Hīnayāna and the Mahāyāna is evident in the accounts of Vasubandhu's conversion from the Hīnayāna to the Mahāyāna. In Paramārtha's version, Vasubandhu converted to the Mahāyāna after Asaṅga pretended he was ill and called him to his side. In the other three accounts, Vasubandhu converted after hearing Mahāyāna texts being recited. As Hsüan-tsang recounts, Vasubandhu overheard through an open window a disciple of Asaṅga reciting the Daśabhūmika-sūtra, and was immediately convinced of the Mahāyāna's superiority.[182] The Tibetan versions are similar to that of Hsüan-tsang, but supply several additional details. Tāranātha records that when Vasubandhu first read his brother's Five Bhūmis, he "failed to understand the Mahāyāna." He did not believe that Asaṅga had received the Bhūmis from Maitreya, and remarked, "Alas! Though Asaṅga meditated for twelve years in the forest, instead of attaining success in his meditation he has composed a work [useless in sense but heavy enough] to be an elephant's load."[183]

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teachings of emptiness is corroborated by Asaṅga's philosophical writings. In his Mahāyānasūtrālamkāra, for example, Asaṅga attacks the Hīnayāna teaching of emptiness on the grounds that it is over-negating. It is significant that Asaṅga aims the charge of over-negation at the Hīnayāna, and not at Nāgārjuna's Madhyamaka. (MSA 11:23 states: This is asserted for the purpose of refuting the extremes of reification and over-negation, and for the purpose of rejecting the progress made by means of the Hīnayāna.
samāropāpavādābhapratiṣedhārthamiṣyate/hīnayānena yānasya pratiṣedhārthameva ca.)

(All quotations of the MSA are taken from the Sanskrit edition by Sylvain Lévi: Mahāyāna-sūtrālamkāra, Exposé de la Doctrine du Grand Véhicule selon Le Système Yogācāra, Paris: Librairie Honoré Champion 1907.)

182 Beal (1994) vol. 1, pp. 228-229; Watters, vol. 1, p. 358.

183 Chattopadhyaya, p. 168. Also in Obermiller (1931-1932) Part 2, p. 143. The "Five Bhūmis" refers to Asaṅga's Yogācārabhūmi in five sections.

When Asaṅga heard of his brother's caustic remark, he decided to try to convert him to the Mahāyāna. He assigned one of his disciples to memorize the Aksayamatinirdeśa-sūtra, and another disciple the Daśabhūmika-sūtra. He then instructed them to recite these texts within the hearing of Vasubandhu. Upon hearing the Aksayamatinirdeśa-sūtra, Vasubandhu thought that the Mahāyāna was logically well-founded, but had doubts as to spiritual rigor. Then when he heard the Daśabhūmika-sūtra, he realized that the Mahāyāna was sound in both theory and practice.[184] According to all the accounts, when Vasubandhu finally understood and was converted to the Mahāyāna, he deeply regretted having previously calumniated the Mahāyāna, and resolved to cut out his tongue in repentance. Asaṅga discouraged him from doing so, and told him that to atone for the sin of slandering the Mahāyāna, he should devote himself to propagating its teachings.[185]

The story of Vasubandhu resolving to cut out his tongue is one of the few details which is included in all four of the biographies. This fact lends it a particular significance. The anecdote, by graphically portraying the depth of Vasubandhu's remorse, shows the importance of his conversion from the Hīnayāna, as well as emphasizing the seriousness of the fault of opposing the Mahāyāna. This, in turn, seems to indicate the existence of a strong tension between the Hīnayāna and the Mahāyāna during the time of Asaṅga and Vasubandhu. All four biographers saw this tension as a central element in the lives of Asaṅga and Vasubandhu. The conflict between the Hīnayāna

184 Chattopadhyaya, pp. 168-169.

185 Takakusu (1904) p. 292; Beal (1994) vol. 1, pp. 228-229; Watters, vol. 1, p. 358; Chattopadhyaya, pp. 169-170; Obermiller (1931-1932) Part 2, p. 143.

and the Mahāyāna is particularly evident in the accounts of Paramārtha and Hsüan-tsang --those which are chronologically closest to Asaṅga and Vasubandhu.

Hsüan-tsang's concern with the conflict between the Hīnayāna and Mahāyāna is manifest in another story of religious conversion which he includes in his travel logs. This is the story of the Buddhist monk, Guṇaprabha. Hsüan-tsang tells us that Guṇaprabha originally had been brought up in the study of the Mahāyāna, but "before he had penetrated its deep principles he had occasion to study the Vibhāsha Śāstra, on which he withdrew from his former work and attached himself to the Little Vehicle." Hsüan-tsang tells us that after his conversion to the Hīnayāna, Guṇaprabha "composed several tens of treatises to overthrow the Great Vehicle, and thus became a zealous partisan of the Little Vehicle school."[186] In changing his allegiance from the Mahāyāna to the Hīnayāna, Guṇaprabha can be seen as a counter-example to Vasubandhu: While Vasubandhu's conversion is presented as spiritual progress, Guṇaprabha's conversion is seen as the reverse, a "regression" from the Mahāyāna to the Hīnayāna.[187]

Continuing with Hsüan-tsang's account of Guṇaprabha's life, we also see a contrast with Asaṅga's spiritual development. Hsüan-tsang tells us that although Guṇaprabha became learned in all the Buddhist teachings, there were ten difficulties which he could not overcome. In order to resolve these

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186 Beal (1994) vol. 1, p. 191; Watters, vol. 1, pp. 322-324.

187 Reginald Ray also interprets Hsüan-tsang's depiction of Guṇaprabha as a counter-example to Vasubandhu. According to Ray's analysis, Guṇaprabha is representative of the dangers of an overly-scholastic practice of Buddhism (Ray, Reginald A. Buddhist Saints in India: A Study in Buddhist Values and Orientations. New York: Oxford University Press, 1994, p. 192).

difficulties, a friend took him to Tuṣita heaven so that he might gain help from Maitreya. Having been brought before Maitreya, however, Guṇaprabha refused to pay him his due reverence, arguing that he himself was an ordained *bhikṣu* who had renounced the world, whereas Maitreya was enjoying heavenly beatitude and was therefore not to be associated with by an ascetic. Maitreya, seeing that Guṇaprabha was bound with pride of self (*ātmamada*), knew he was not a vessel for instruction, and therefore did not help Guṇaprabha. Hsüan-tsang tells us that because Guṇaprabha was not able to put away his pride, he died without attaining the state of an *arhat*.[188] Guṇaprabha's feeling of pride while meeting with Maitreya contrasts strongly with Asaṅga's feeling of reverence for the same Bodhisattva. While Asaṅga benefits tremendously from his encounter with Maitreya, Guṇaprabha's meeting with Maitreya is rendered unsuccessful by his pride, a vice for which Mahāyāna writers frequently criticized Hīnayāna monks. In summary, the sharp contrast between Hsüan-tsang's account of Guṇaprabha on the one hand, and his accounts of Asaṅga and Vasubandhu on the other, serves to emphasize the difference between the Hīnayāna and the Mahāyāna, as well as to display the superiority of the Mahāyāna.

In contrast to the importance which Hsüan-tsang places upon the conflict between the Hīnayāna and the Mahāyāna, the two Tibetan sources appear to pay it relatively little heed. This is evident, for example, in the fact that neither Bu-ston nor Tāranātha mention Asaṅga's early affiliation with the Hīnayāna and his conversion to the Mahāyāna. Tāranātha only tells us that Asaṅga "went for ordination and spent a year serving the *upādhyāya* (tutor), *ācārya* (teacher) and the *saṃgha* (monastic order)," and that later,

188 Beal (1994) vol. 1, pp. 191-192; Watters, vol. 1, p. 323.

Asaṅga turned to Maitreya as a tutelary deity who might help him resolve his difficulties in understanding the Prajñāpāramitā *sūtras*.[189] Bu-ston tells us even less, stating simply that Asaṅga "became possessed of the intention of propagating the Doctrine, after having secured the help of Maitreya."[190] Furthermore, according to Tāranātha, Asaṅga did not seem to show any bias toward particular subdivisions within the Buddhist tradition. "He taught in every way without showing any bias for any *sūtra* or *siddhānta*. That is why, even the *śrāvaka*-s of the time respected him highly. Many *śrāvaka*-s learnt their own *sūtra*-s and *abhidharma* [from him]."[191] Although a certain degree tension between the Hīnayāna and the Mahāyāna is indicated in the Tibetan sources, it is presented as not much more than a friendly rivalry. For example, Tāranātha tells us of Asaṅga, "He was of strong moral conduct and vastly learned. 'It is a great wonder that he was still an adept in the Vidyā-mantra!' --the others [Hīnayānīs] used to say. 'His only fault was that of entering the Mahāyāna.'"[192]

The relatively strong emphasis on the conflict between factions of the Hīnayāna, and between the Hīnayāna and the Mahāyāna in the two earlier accounts may be due to the fact that they were written at a considerably earlier date than the Tibetan accounts. Histories and biographies are often as much a reflection of the time in which they are written as they are a depiction of the time to which they refer. Throughout his journey in India,

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189 Chattopadhyaya, p. 156.

190 Obermiller (1931-1932) Part 2, p. 137.

191 Chattopadhyaya, p. 166.

192 Chattopadhyaya, p. 166.

Hsüan-tsang witnessed a great deal of conflict, both between factions of the Hīnayāna, and between the Hīnayāna and the Mahāyāna. He sums up his impressions as follows:

> The different schools are constantly at variance, and their contending utterances rise like the angry waves of the sea. The different sects have their separate masters, and in various directions aim at one end.
>
> There are Eighteen schools, each claiming pre-eminence. The partisans of the Great and Little Vehicle are content to dwell apart. There are some who give themselves up to quiet contemplation, and devote themselves, whether walking or standing still or sitting down, to the acquirement of wisdom and insight; others, on the contrary, differ from these in raising noisy contentions about their faith. According to their fraternity, they are governed by distinctive rules and regulations, which we need not name.[193]

In contrast to Hsüan-tsang's experiences, by the time of Bu-ston and Tāranātha, the conflicts within the Hīnayāna and between the Hīnayāna and the Mahāyāna had largely subsided. In order to ascertain the extent to which these author's accounts of Asaṅga and Vasubandhu were influenced by their own situations, it is extremely helpful to examine accounts which were written during the actual time in which Asaṅga and Vasubandhu lived.

The most valuable source in this regard is the record of the Chinese Buddhist monk, Fa-hsien (fl. 399-418 CE), who traveled to India during the

193 Beal (1994) vol. 1, p. 80; Watters, vol. 1, p. 162.

time of Asaṅga and Vasubandhu. Fa-hsien was one of the earliest successful Chinese Buddhist pilgrims to India. He came to India in search for *vinaya* texts, since the ones available in China were incomplete and disordered.[194] He organized a party of five monks and left China in 399. After three years of travel he and his fellow travelers reached North India. Fa-hsien recorded his experiences and impressions in a travel journal entitled Fo-keu-ki.[195] In his journey through India, he passed through the region where Asaṅga and Vasubandhu were living. Although he does not mention either of the brothers, his records provide valuable information regarding the religious landscape of which they were a part.

V. Status of the Mahāyāna During the Time of Asaṅga and Vasubandhu

In his account, Fa-hsien carefully notes which of the monasteries he visited were Mahāyāna and which were Hīnayāna.[196] This tells us two things about the Buddhist Tradition at that time. First, that there was a clear differentiation between the Hīnayāna and the Mahāyāna, and second, that the differentiation was an important one (at least important enough for Fa-hsien to mention it so methodically). Fa-hsien also mentions divisions within the Hīnayāna. He differentiates between Buddhist factions in terms of the texts

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[194] Legge, James. A Record of Buddhistic Kingdoms. Being an Account by the Chinese Monk Fâ-Hien of his Travels in India and Ceylon (A.D. 399-414) in Search of the Buddhist Books of Discipline. New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1965, pp. 9-10.

[195] Translated by James Legge (1965). Also in Samuel Beal's Su-Yu-Ki: Buddhist Records of the Western World, 1994.

[196] E.g., Legge, pp. 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 21, 23, 24, 29, 32, 41, 52, 54.

or personages which they revered. He tells us that "the Śrāmaṇeras mostly make their offerings to Rāhula. The professors of the Abhidharma make their offerings to it; those of the Vinaya to it.... Students of the Mahāyāna present offerings to the Prajñā-pāramitā, to Mañjuśrī, and to Kwan-she-yin [i.e., Avalokiteśvara]."[197] Fa-hsien further differentiates between the factions in terms of their *vinaya*: the eighteen schools of the Hīnayāna each had their separate *vinaya*, he reports, and the Mahāyāna monks followed the *vinaya* of the Mahāsāṃghikas.[198]

Of the monasteries Fa-hsien mentions, ten he says are Hīnayāna, and only four are Mahāyāna. This sampling of Buddhist monasteries seems to indicate the dominance of the Hīnayāna in the place and time which Asaṅga and Vasubandhu lived. The dominance of the Hīnayāna is indicated further by the fact that of the four monasteries which Fa-hsien identifies as Mahāyāna, only one is exclusively so. In the cases where he identifies a monastery as Mahāyāna, Fa-hsien states that "most of the monks" study the Mahāyāna there. When he identifies a Hīnayāna monastery, on the other hand, he says that "all of the monks" study the Hīnayāna. The one monastery which is solely Mahāyāna is situated beside a Hīnayāna monastery.[199] These details, taken together, give the impression of a period

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197 Legge, p. 46.

198 Legge, p. 99.

In 630 CE Hsüan-tsang tells us that in Udyāna, certain Mahāyāna monks were teaching their own Vinayapiṭaka along with those of the Dharmagupta, Kāśyapīya, Sarvāstivāda and Mahāsāṃghika. This is corroborated by two Buddhist *sūtras* which attest that these five groups were living in accord in Udyāna (Beal, vol. 1, p. 121; Watters vol. 1, p. 226).

199 For a discussion of Chinese pilgrims' accounts of Hīnayāna and Mahāyāna monks sharing monasteries, see Dutt, Sukumar. Buddhist Monks and Monasteries in India: Their History and their Contribution to Indian Culture.

in Buddhist history in which, institutionally, the Mahāyāna was still very closely tied to the dominant Hīnayāna tradition. Even the fact that Mahāyāna monks followed a separate *vinaya* does not indicate that they were significantly different in their religious observances. Fa-hsien tells us that the *vinayas* of the eighteen schools and those of the Mahāyāna "agree in the general meaning, but they have small and trivial differences...."[200] In fact, when he is unsuccessful in finding a written copy of the Sarvāstivāda *vinaya*, Fa-hsien is content to bring back with him instead a copy of the *vinaya* he is given at a Mahāyāna monastery in Pāṭaliputra.[201]

Given these details, we can tentatively accept the conclusion that at the time of Fa-hsien (and of Asaṅga and Vasubandhu) the Mahāyāna had not established itself as a movement entirely separate from the Hīnayāna. Granted, there may have been monasteries which were exclusively Mahāyāna, but if there were, they seem to have been relatively few. Although clearly defined from the Hīnayāna, the Mahāyāna does not appear to have yet become a fully emergent force within the Buddhist Tradition. In terms of numbers, they were overshadowed by the Hīnayāna, and in terms of religious observance, they had not developed a truly distinctive code. Unfortunately, Fa-hsien does not give any summary descriptions of the religious landscape in India. In order to obtain a more detailed and explicit description of the status of the Mahāyāna, we need to turn to our other historical sources.

After Fa-hsien's travel log, the account which chronologically is

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London: G. Allen and Unwin, 1962, p. 77.

200 Legge, p. 99.

201 Legge, pp. 98-99.

closest to Asaṅga and Vasubandhu is that of Paramārtha. A number of details in Paramārtha's account corroborate the impression that the Mahāyāna was not widely spread during the time of Asaṅga and Vasubandhu. For example, Paramārtha tells us that when Asaṅga first tried to proclaim the teachings of the Mahāyāna, "most of those hearing him did not believe him."[202] It is not until Maitreya came down from Tuṣita heaven to assist Asaṅga that people were convinced of the validity of the Mahāyāna teachings. According to Paramārtha, the very existence of the Mahāyāna was tenuous enough that Asaṅga feared Vasubandhu's critiques could demolish it: it is in fear of this end that Asaṅga resolved to convert his brother to the Mahāyāna.

The grounds upon which Vasubandhu attacked the Mahāyāna give further indications of the vincibility of the Mahāyāna during that time. According to Paramārtha, Vasubandhu "did not believe in the Mahāyāna, thinking that the Mahāyāna was not the Buddha's own teaching."[203] Since being *buddhadeśanā* or *buddhavacana* is the basic criteria for a teaching to be accepted as Buddhist, Vasubandhu's opinion was an outright and complete rejection of the Mahāyāna. The rejection of the Mahāyāna on the grounds that it was not the teaching of the Buddha seems to have been a major concern of Asaṅga and Vasubandhu, for defenses against this claim are found throughout their philosophical writings.[204] In other sources, we

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202 Takakusu (1904) p. 274.

203 Takakusu (1904) p. 290.

204 The rejection of the Mahāyāna on the grounds that it was not the teaching of the Buddha was of serious concern to Asaṅga and Vasubandhu. Asaṅga especially gives numerous defenses against this claim in his philosophical writings. (See above, Chap. 4. Sect. II.)

see that even labeling something as Mahāyāna was considered a rejection of its authenticity. The Abhidharmadīpa, for example, criticizes Vasubandhu's AK, accusing Vasubandhu of entering the portals of Mahāyāna Buddhism.[205]

Taken together, the biographical and historical sources seem to indicate that during the time of Asaṅga and Vasubandhu, the Mahāyāna was not securely established as a movement distinct from the Hīnayāna. This conclusion seems to go against traditional accounts which connect the arising of the Mahāyāna with the reign of King Kaniṣka in the late first or early second century CE.[206] However, the use of such accounts to trace the development of the Mahāyāna has been called seriously into question on both textual and archaeological grounds.[207] Gregory Schopen, for example,

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205 For a discussion of the Abhidharmadīpa's attacks on Vasubandhu's Mahāyānistic leanings in the Abhidharmakośa, see Jaini (1958).

206 The Mañjuśrīmūlakalpa, for example, states that Kaniṣka presided over the establishment of the Prajñāpāramitā in Northwest India. Tāranātha records that during Kaniṣka's rule, five hundred *arhats*, five hundred Bodhisattvas and five hundred common (*pṛthagjana*) *paṇḍitas* attended the third council at Jalandhara monastery (Chattopadhyaya p. 93). The presence of the large number of Bodhisattvas seems to indicate the prior institutionalization of the Mahāyāna.

The existence of a class of monks called *bodhisattva-jātika* is attested to in the Divyāvadāna. It is indicated here that they were looked down upon by the Hīnayāna monks (See Dutt, Nalinaksha. Aspects of Mahāyāna Buddhism and its Relation to Hīnayāna. London: 1930, p. 40).

207 See, for example:

Bareau (1955) pp. 296-305;

Cohen, Richard S. "Discontented Categories: Hīnayāna and Mahāyāna in Indian Buddhist History." JAAR 63:1 (1995) 1-25.

Harrison, Paul. "Who Gets to Ride in the Great Vehicle? Self-Image and Identity Among the Followers of the Early Mahāyāna." JIABS 10:1 (1987) 67-89.

Hirakawa, Akira. "The Rise of Mahāyāna Buddhism And its Relationship to the Worship of Stūpas." Memoirs of the Research Department of the Toyo Bunko, 22 (1963) 57-106.

remarks that it is a "demonstrable fact that anything even approaching popular support for the Mahāyāna cannot be documented until the 4th/5th century AD."[208] Reginald Ray supports Schopen's dating for the arising of the Mahāyāna, proposing a compelling model in which the Mahāyāna developed in two stages:

> In the first stage, the Mahāyāna arose as a forest movement. This early Mahāyāna cannot be dated with any precision, although Conze's date of the second or first century B.C.E. seems not unreasonable. In the second stage, which occurred some centuries later, perhaps in the late third and fourth centuries, we find the Mahāyāna developing a monastic side, which is reflected in the evidence from the northwest.[209]

MacQueen, Graeme. "Inspired Speech in Early Mahāyāna Buddhism," in 2 parts. Religion 11 (1981) 303-319, 12 (1982) 49-65.

Rawlinson, Andrew. "The Problem of the Origin of the Mahāyāna" in Traditions in Contact and Change; Proceedings of the XIVth Congress of the International Association for the History of Religions. Peter Slater and Donald Wiebe, eds. Waterloo, Ontario: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1980, 163-170.

Schopen, Gregory. "Mahāyāna in Indian Inscriptions.' IIJ 21 (1979) 1-19; also "The Phrase '*sa pṛthivīpradeśaś caityabhūto bhavet*' in the *Vajracchedikā*: Notes on the Cult of the Book in Mahāyāna." Indo-Iranian Journal 17 (1975) 147-181; and "The Inscription on the Kuṣān Image of Amitābha and the Character of the Early Mahāyāna in India." JIABS 10:2 (1987) 99-137.

Ray, Reginald A. Buddhist Saints in India: A Study in Buddhist Values and Orientations. New York: Oxford University Press, 1994, p. 411.

In addition to the question of when the Mahāyāna arose, there is the more fundamental question (briefly discussed above, Chap. 4, Sect. IV) of the nature of the distinction between the Hīnayāna and Mahāyāna.

208 Schopen (1987) p. 124.

209 Ray, p. 412.

It is not until the seventh century, Ray suggests, that Mahāyāna monasticism became well-established, particularly in Northwest India. This analysis corresponds with the historical accounts we have examined, which do not give indications of wide-spread Mahāyāna monasticism until the time Hsüan-tsang.[210]

Making use of Ray's model, we can situate Asaṅga and Vasubandhu in the early part of the second phase of the development of the Mahāyāna, when the Mahāyāna was just beginning to establish its monastic side. It is at this point that the Mahāyāna began to assert its distinctiveness along scholastic grounds such as its interpretation of the doctrine of emptiness. This is reflected in the biographies, for example, when Asaṅga leaves the Hīnayāna because he is dissatisfied with their teaching of emptiness. This model corresponds, furthermore, with the differences between the biographies which I have traced in the preceding analysis. First, in Fa-hsien's account, during the time of Asaṅga and Vasubandhu, the Hīnayāna and Mahāyāna are clearly differentiated, but the Mahāyāna does not appear to be fully emergent. The concern for the Mahāyāna gaining

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210 When we compare Hsüan-tsang and Fa-hsien's accounts of places which they both visited, we can see first of all an overall growth in the Buddhist Tradition. For example, Fa-hsien records that in the town of Wu-i, there were 4,000 followers of the Buddhist Tradition (Legge, p. 14-15; Beal (1994) p. xxiv-xxv). Two hundred years later, Hsüan-tsang estimates 20,000 monks residing there (Beal (1994) vol. 1, p. 18).

In addition to the growth of the Buddhist Tradition in general, there also seems to have been an increased representation of the Mahāyāna specifically. For example, Fa-hsien tells us that in Wu-chang (modern day Udyāna) the Buddhist monks "belong to the Little Vehicle without exception"(Legge, pp. 28-29; Beal (1994) pp. xxx-xxxi). When Hsüan-tsang visits the same place, however, he notes that all the monks are "believers in the Great Vehicle" (Beal (1994) vol. 1, p. 120).

ground, and the assertion of its superiority relative to the Hīnayāna appear in Paramārtha's account, and culminate in that of Hsüan-tsang. Finally, by the time of the Tibetan history of Bu-ston, the Mahāyāna's position relative to the Hīnayāna appears to have become sufficiently secure that a conflict between the two movements is no longer of primary concern.

Although the traditional biographies of Asaṅga and Vasubandhu may be of questionable historical accuracy, they are extremely valuable in that they present Buddhist understandings of who Asaṅga and Vasubandhu were, and what role they played in Buddhist history. Indeed, the traditional biographies may represent more closely the general Buddhist views regarding Asaṅga and Vasubandhu than do the later philosophical writings of thinkers such as Bhāvaviveka and Dharmapāla. Modern understandings of the role of Asaṅga and Vasubandhu in Buddhist history have been shaped primarily by the latter group of texts, which were part of interscholastic debates. These sources present only part of the picture, however. It is important to recognize the significantly different depiction of Asaṅga and Vasubandhu which emerges from the traditional biographies.

In terms of intra-Buddhist conflicts, the biographers unanimously present the brothers as deeply involved in the defense of the Mahāyāna against the more firmly established and powerful Hīnayāna. We saw, for example, that Asaṅga's one desire, once he attains a vision of the Bodhisattva Maitreya, is to spread the Mahāyāna. And we saw the tremendous significance Vasubandhu accords to the fault of deriding the Mahāyāna, when he resolves to undergo self-mutilation to atone for having committed this wrong-doing. Even Tāranātha's account, which minimizes the conflict between the Hīnayāna and the Mahāyāna, suggests that Asaṅga and Vasubandhu were involved in the emergence and spread of the

Mahāyāna during a time in which the Hīnayāna held sway. Tāranātha states that before the time of Asaṅga, "the number of the Mahāyāna monks did not reach ten thousand. Even in the days of Nāgārjuna, most of the monks were *śrāvaka*-s. During the time of this *ācārya* [i.e., Asaṅga], the number of Mahāyāna monks reached tens of thousands. Because of these reasons, it is said that he became the foremost [preacher] of the Mahāyāna Law."[211] Concerning Vasubandhu, Tāranātha tells us that his conversion to the Mahāyāna had a significant effect within the Buddhist community. He states that when Vasubandhu entered the Mahāyāna, about five hundred other scholars of the Śrāvaka Piṭakas followed him.[212]

VI. Conclusion

In conclusion, I turn directly to the question of Asaṅga and Vasubandhu's role as founders of the Yogācāra, and the question of their doxographical self-understanding. It is clear that at some point in Buddhist history, the Yogācāra became defined as a school distinct from and in philosophical opposition to the Madhyamaka. The Chinese Buddhist pilgrim I-ching (635-713 CE) provides the earliest historical account of this division within the Mahāyāna. He writes:

> There are but two kinds of the so-called Mahāyāna. First, the Mādhyamika; second, the Yoga. The former profess that what is commonly

211 Chattopadhyaya, p. 166.

212 Chattopadhyaya, p. 171.

> called existence is in reality non-existence, and every object is but an empty show, like an illusion, whereas the latter affirm that there exist no outer things *in reality*, but only inward thoughts, and all things exist only in the mind.[213]

Buddhist philosophical writings provide even earlier evidence of a conflict between scholars who explicitly associated themselves with the Yogācāra and those who identified themselves with the Madhyamaka. The Madhyamaka scholar, Bhāvaviveka (c. 490-570 CE) is one of the primary scholars whose writings attest to such a conflict.[214] Bhāvaviveka's counterpart, Dharmapāla (c. 530-561 CE) provided responses to Madhyamaka critiques of the Yogācāra, as well as counter-critiques of the Madhyamaka. By the time of Hsüan-tsang, the conflict between the Madhyamaka and the Yogācāra had become more pronounced and more widely spread. Hsüan-tsang himself studied under the Yogācāra master Śīlabhadra at Nālandā, and is said to have composed a philosophical essay underscoring the compatibility of Madhyamaka and Yogācāra teachings. Unfortunately, no such text exists today. Contemporaneous with Hsüan-tsang was Candrakīrti (600-650 CE), who strongly criticized the Yogācāra from a Prāsaṅgika point of view.[215]

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213 Takakusu, Junjiro. A Record of the Buddhist Religion As Practiced in India and the Malay Archipelago, By I-Tsing. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1896, p. 15.

214 It is possible that Paramārtha, who lived at the same time as Bhāvaviveka, was unaware of these conflicts because he was in China. The antagonism between the Madhyamaka and Yogācāra was perhaps in early enough stages that it had not spread wider than the writings of a few Indian scholastic monks.

215 For a further discussion of the philosophical disputes between the Madhyamaka and Yogācāra which postdate Asaṅga and Vasubandhu see above,

The above evidence, which post-dates Asaṅga and Vasubandhu by at least one generation, and possibly up to two hundred years, clearly indicates the existence of a conflict between the Madhyamaka and Yogācāra schools. It does not, however, imply that Asaṅga and Vasubandhu were involved in such a conflict, or even that they were involved in defining the Yogācāra as a distinct school within the Mahāyāna. The account which dates most closely to the time of Asaṅga and Vasubandhu, that of Fa-hsien, gives no indication whatsoever that Asaṅga and Vasubandhu were involved or concerned with divisions within the Mahāyāna, or even that any such divisions existed. Nor do Paramārtha or Hsüan-tsang's accounts of Asaṅga and Vasubandhu give any indication of a conflict between the Madhyamaka and Yogācāra schools. Furthermore, none of these accounts explicitly associate Asaṅga or Vasubandhu with the Yogācāra. In these early sources, Asaṅga and Vasubandhu are credited with the authorship of a number of texts which we as modern scholars identify as early Yogācāra writings, but no where is the term Yogācāra (or any of the various names of this school) connected with these texts or with their authors.

Although Asaṅga and Vasubandhu are portrayed by their biographers as being engaged in conflicts within the Buddhist Tradition, these conflicts are between the Hīnayāna and the Mahāyāna, and not between the Yogācāra and the Madhyamaka. The biographical accounts, as well as recent studies by western scholars, indicate that during the time of Asaṅga and Vasubandhu, there existed a tension between the early Mahāyāna's self-consciousness as a group separate from the Hīnayāna, and its simultaneous proximity to the Hīnayāna. Although a Buddhist monk at the

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time of Asaṅga and Vasubandhu might identify himself as belonging to the Mahāyāna, he is likely to have been instructed in the doctrines of the Hīnayāna schools, and to have lived together and practiced with Hīnayāna monks. Living during a period in which the Mahāyāna was still in its early stages, Asaṅga and Vasubandhu appear to have been concerned with asserting the Mahāyāna's distinctness from, and indeed superiority to the Hīnayāna. As their biographers portray them, rather than critiquing other Mahāyāna thinkers, they were attempting to establish the authenticity of the Mahāyāna as a whole.

Chapter 4
Doxographical Indications in the Early Yogācāra Writings

I. Introduction

The question of Asaṅga and Vasubandhu's doxographical self-understanding (that is to say, which group they consciously affiliated themselves with, and how they saw that group relating to other divisions within the Buddhist fold), has thus far been addressed indirectly, looking at how their biographers portrayed them. In attempting to answer the question of whether the early Yogācāra writers were actively defining themselves against Nāgārjuna's Madhyamaka as a distinct philosophical school within the Mahāyāna, the most direct approach is to search the early Yogācāra texts themselves for doxographical indications. Along these lines, my analysis will begin by looking at passages in which the Asaṅga and Vasubandhu defend their views against outside critiques. I will ask what precisely these critiques are, and from whom they are coming. This will give some indication of how other religious groups viewed the early Yogācāra: more importantly, it will tell us how Asaṅga and Vasubandhu thought others viewed them. Next, I will examine Asaṅga and Vasubandhus' own critiques of opposing views. Here, I will seek to identify the groups to whom they define themselves in opposition, and to determine the particular views to which they are opposed.

In considering the implications of Asaṅga and Vasubandhu's defensive and offensive stances, I will briefly compare their polemic with

the Mahāyāna literature which preceded them. In placing the offensive and defensive polemic of the early Yogācāra writings within this larger context, we can consider the implications of this polemic and its relation to Buddhist history. More specifically, we can consider the distinction between the Mahāyāna as an historical versus an ideological category.

In returning to the discussion of doxographical indications in the early Yogācāra writings, I will examine the models which the early Yogācāra writers provide to interpret the divisions which they saw to exist within the Buddhist fold. I will focus upon how the early Yogācāra writers used these hermeneutical devices to make sense of their continuity with and distinction from the Hīnayāna. Finally, I will take into account indirect evidence regarding the early Yogācāra writers' position within the Buddhist fold by briefly cataloguing the texts from which they draw. Together with the other portions of this chapter, this will indicate where the early Yogācāra writers located their own writings within the Buddhist tradition, and help us to answer the question of the relation between the early Madhyamaka and Yogācāra schools.

It is important to reiterate that this dissertation examines the history of ideas, not the history of religious practice, or institutional history. Chapter Three considered the ideological depictions of Asaṅga and Vasubandhu that have been handed down within the Buddhist Tradition: it sought to uncover certain Buddhists' understanding of the history of the Buddhist Tradition, and the role of Asaṅga and Vasubandhu within it. This chapter is concerned with uncovering Asaṅga and Vasubandhu's own conceptual map of the Buddhist Tradition and their place within it. Finally, Chapters Five and Six will examine how this conceptual map relates to the philosophical ideas which the early Yogācāra writers present.

II. The Early Yogācāra Writers' Defense of the Mahāyāna

One of the remarkable features of the early Yogācāra writings is the frequency with which they defend their own position against opposing views. These defenses are notable not only in their prevalence, but in their prominence as well. Asaṅga's MSA, which contains his most extensive and systematic defense of the Mahāyāna, begins by praising the teachings which are about to be propounded, and then immediately proceeds to defend these teachings against various critiques. From the very beginning of the text, it is evident that Asaṅga is writing within a context of debate between conflicting and competing views. There are no indications, however, that Asaṅga's stance in these debates has anything to do with his association with the Yogācāra school specifically. The objections which Asaṅga confronts are aimed explicitly at the Mahāyāna, a fact reflected in the title of the first chapter of the MSA: "Proofs of the Mahāyāna" (*Mahāyāna-siddhi-adhikāra*). Other passages which seek to authenticate the Mahāyāna are found throughout the early Yogācāra writings. The final chapter of the MV, for instance, is entitled "The Supremacy of the Vehicle" (*yānānuttarya*); and in the MS, of the four sections which comprise the introductory chapter, one deals with the superiority of the Mahāyāna, and another deals with the authenticity of the Mahāyāna.

The early Yogācāra writers' sensitivity to accusations of heterodoxy would seem to indicate that they considered themselves as part of a group whose teachings may be rejected on the grounds that they differ from earlier ones which are considered authoritative. More precisely, they display a certain wariness regarding the relative novelty of the Mahāyāna teachings

they were presenting. Indeed, one of Asaṅga's first lines of defense in the first chapter of the MSA is to deny that the Mahāyāna teachings are new. With the assumption that his opponent opposes the Mahāyāna on the basis of its novelty, Asaṅga claims that the Mahāyāna began at the same time as the Śrāvakayāna.[216] We can see here, as well as in the critiques that follow, that the objections which Asaṅga faces are being launched from within the Buddhist tradition: more precisely, they come from the Hīnayāna[217] and

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216 MSA 1:7a. In his commentary to this verse, Vasubandhu expands on Asaṅga's brief explanation that the Mahāyāna is the Buddha's word "because of beginning together" (*samapravṛtteḥ*). He states: "It is clear that the Mahāyāna began at the same time as the Śrāvakayāna and not later. Why then should one conceive that it is not the Buddha's word?" *samapravṛtteḥ samakālaṃ ca śrāvakayānena mahāyānasya pravṛttirupalabhyate na paścāditi katham asyābuddhavacanatvaṃ vijñāyate|* See also MSA 1:15 and it's commentary.

217 Asaṅga and Vasubandhu tend to use the terms Śrāvakayāna and Pratyekabuddhayāna more than Hīnayāna. This falls in line with Paul Harrison's observation that in the early Mahāyāna literature (dating to the second half of the second century CE) the terms Śrāvakayāna and Pratyekabuddhayāna are used much more frequently than Hīnayāna, which only appears four times in the eleven texts he surveys (Harrison, p. 80).

Asaṅga's use of these terms is not entirely consistent, however. Sometimes he uses Śrāvakayāna as a synonym for Hīnayāna (for definitions equating these two terms see MVy 1252 and Saddharmapuṇḍarīka (SP) 79:6, 80:7), in which cases it includes both the Śrāvakayāna and the Pratyekabuddhayāna. Other times he uses Śrāvakayāna more restrictively as distinct from the Pratyekabuddhayāna. To resolve any ambiguity, I use the term Hīnayāna to include the Śrāvakayāna and the Pratyekabuddhayāna, and Śrāvakayāna to refer only specifically to the path of Śrāvakas.

It is worth noting here a recent article by Jeffrey Samuels which questions the identification of the Bodhisattvayāna with the Mahāyāna and the Śrāvakayāna with the Hīnayāna. This model, he argues, is an oversimplification which belies the presence of the Bodhisattva ideal in the Theravāda Tradition. Samuels traces the earliest uses of this model to Nāgārjuna, and also points to its use by Asaṅga and Candrakīrti (Samuels, Jeffrey. "The Bodhisattva Ideal in Theravāda Buddhist Theory and Practice: A Reevaluation of the Bodhisattva-Śrāvaka Opposition." PEW 47:3 (1997) 399-415). For a further discussion of Samuels' argument, see above, pp. 132-134.

are targeted at the Mahāyāna.

Closely tied to the issue of the novelty of the Mahāyāna is the question of its orthodoxy. The most common and the most fundamental objection which the early Yogācāra writers confront is that the teachings of the Mahāyāna are not the words of the Buddha –they are not *buddhavacana*. In his commentary to the MSA, Vasubandhu introduces this issue by voicing the objections of the "sinful,"[218] who argue that the Mahāyāna is not the teaching of the Buddha, and therefore is not worthy of praise.[219] The claim that the Mahāyāna is not the teaching of the Buddha is tantamount to the denial that it is Buddhist at all. In answering this objection, the early Yogācāra writers are called upon to distinguish themselves clearly from other religious groups of the time, specifically the dialecticians (*tarkika*), or heretics (*tīrthika*). Asaṅga addresses this issue early in the MSA, asserting that the Mahāyāna is beyond the scope (*agocara*) of dialectics, and detailing a number of ways in which the Mahāyāna differs from the non-Buddhist points of view.[220] In this way, Asaṅga is careful to affirm that while the Mahāyāna is distinct from the Hīnayāna, it is still Buddhist. Assertions such as these are further indications of a wariness on Asaṅga's part of the

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218 For this particularly Buddhist meaning of *vipratipanna*, see Franklin Edgerton's Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit Grammar and Dictionary. 2 vols. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1953.

219 MSAbh 1:6.

naivedaṃ mahāyānaṃ buddhavacanaṃ kutastasyāyamanuśamso bhaviṣyatītyatra vipratipannāstasya buddhavacanatvaprasādhanārthaṃ kāraṇavibhājyamārabhya ślokaḥ/

The word for praise, here, *anuśaṃsa*, is a Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit term which usually refers to the benefit or blessing which comes from works of merit (See Edgerton).

220 MSA 1:7 and 1:12.

Mahāyāna's tenuous position within the Buddhist fold.

In defending against accusations of heterodoxy, Asaṅga examines the criteria by which one judges whether a given teaching was spoken by the Buddha. Vasubandhu introduces Asaṅga's analysis by noting the Śrāvakas' accusation that the Mahāyāna teaching that all dharmas are devoid of intrinsic nature (*svabhāva*) simply contradicts the nature of reality (*dharmatā*), and thus can not have been taught by the Buddha.[221] Asaṅga addresses this accusation by citing the traditional definition of the Buddha's speech (*buddhavacana*) as having the following characteristics: it is found in the *sūtras*, it is found in the *vinaya*, and it does not contradict the nature of reality (*dharmatā*).[222] Concerning the first two criteria, Asaṅga asserts that the Mahāyāna appears in its own *sūtras* and its own *vinaya*.[223] As for the third criterion, Asaṅga simply asserts that because of its generosity (*audārya*) and profundity (*gāmbhīrya*), the Mahāyāna does not run counter

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221 The term *svabhāva* is central to Mahāyāna thought, and contains several shades of meaning. Throughout the dissertation, I will translate *svabhāva* as either nature, intrinsic nature, own-being, or intrinsic being, depending on the context.

222 Vasubandhu lists these criteria in his commentary to MSA 1:10: "The characteristic of the Buddha's word is that it appears in the *sūtra*, is evident in the *vinaya*, and that it does not contradict reality. *buddhavacanasyedaṃ lakṣaṇaṃ yatsūtre 'vatarati vinaye saṃdṛśyate dharmatāṃ ca na vilomayati.*

The same definition of *buddhavacana* is cited in the Dīrghāgama (Tok. 12:9.15a). In the Mahāparinibbāna sutta, only the first two criteria are listed: *tāni ce sutte otāriyamānāni vinaye sandassiyamānāni na c'eva sutte otaranti na vinaye sandissanti niṭṭham ettha gantabbaṃ addhā idaṃ na c'eva tassa bhagavato vacanaṃ...ti/* Dīgha Nikāya. ed. Thomas William Rhys Davids, et al. 3 vols. London: Pali Text Society, 1889-1910, vol. 2, p. 124.

223 For a discussion regarding the existence of a Mahāyāna canonical corpus, see above, Chap. 4 Sect. VI.

to reality.[224]

As we can see in the above passage, the Śrāvakas' purported accusation that the Mahāyāna is not the Buddha's teaching appears to stem primarily from their objections to the Mahāyāna teaching of emptiness. Vasubandhu adds to Asaṅga's defense of the authenticity of the Mahāyāna conception of emptiness by claiming that it was taught many times in the Buddhist *sūtras*. He acknowledges that this teaching does not appear explicitly in the scriptures of the Śrāvakayāna, but asserts that nevertheless, it is conveyed through many synonyms (*paryāya*).[225] He adds that since the doctrine of emptiness has been taught in so many ways, it must be very important. In identifying the teaching of emptiness as a potential ground for rejecting the Mahāyāna as inauthentic, the early Yogācāra writers bear a strong resemblance to Nāgārjuna. In his Ratnāvalī, for example, Nāgārjuna writes:

> The teaching in the Mahāyāna of non-production
> And of extinction in the Hīnayāna are the same
> Emptiness [since they show that inherent
> existence] is extinguished

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224 MSA 1:11b.
audāryād api gāmbhīryād aviruddhaiva dharmatā|
Asaṅga takes these two characteristics (i.e. magnificence and profundity) to be particular features which characterize the Mahāyāna since they are lacking in the Śrāvakayāna. (See, for example, MSA 1:13.)
Regarding the correspondence of the doctrine of emptiness with reality, Asaṅga argues in MSA 1:7 that if the Mahāyāna were counter to the true dharma (*saddharma*), the Buddha would have predicted its arising when he spoke of the dangers which will befall the Buddhist Tradition in the future.

225 MSAbh 1:15. Here, Vasubandhu adopts an interpretive stance which rejects the literal or explicit meaning of the text in favor of the intended meaning. For a further discussion of this hermeneutical approach in early Yogācāra writings, see below, pp. 140-143.

> And that nothing [inherently existent] is produced;
> Then let the Mahāyāna be accepted [as Buddha's word].[226]

The early Yogācāra writers not only share Nāgārjuna's concern with defending the Mahāyāna teaching of emptiness, but also address this concern in a similar way, asserting its authenticity by pointing to its roots in the Hīnayāna.

The early Yogācāra writers, besides being concerned with asserting that the Buddha taught the doctrine of emptiness, are eager to address any fears to which this doctrine may give rise. In light of these possible fears, Vasubandhu assures the reader that the Mahāyāna does not teach only emptiness, it teaches a variety of paths: along with the path which entails the accumulation of knowledge, it also teaches the path which entails the accumulation of merit.[227] Generally speaking, the early Yogācāra writers display a great concern that the Mahāyāna may appear fearsome or distasteful to those who are not familiar with it. In the first chapter of the

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226 Ratnāvalī v. 386.

anutpādo mahāyāne pareṣāṃ śūnyatā kṣayaḥ/ kṣayānutpādayoś caikyam arthaḥ kṣamyatāṃ yataḥ//

Sanskrit quotations from the Ratnāvalī are taken from the appendix to P.L. Vaidya's work, Madhyamakaśāstra of Nāgārjuna with the Commentary: Prasannapadā by Candrakīrti. Buddhist Sanskrit Series Texts no. 10. Darbhanga: Mithila Institute, 1987. Vaidya's appendix contains an edition of the fourth chapter, the only portion of the Ratnāvalī available in Sanskrit.

The entire Tibetan text has been edited by Ngawang Samten in, Ratnāvalī of Ācārya Nāgārjuna with the Commentary by Ajitamitra. Varanasi: Central Institute of Higher Tibetan Studies, 1990.

Translations are taken from Jeffrey Hopkins and Lati Rimpoche's Precious Garland and the Song of the Four Mindfulnesses. The Wisdom of Tibet Series no. 2. New York, Harper and Row, Publishers, 1975.

227 MSAbh 1:15.

MSA, Asaṅga devotes three verses to address the causes for fearing the Mahāyāna, as well as the reasons such fears are unwarranted.[228] He attributes the fears of the Mahāyāna to limitations in the person who is fearful, describing the fearful person as one who has no spiritual gene, who has bad friends, whose mind is uncultivated, and who has no previously gathered virtues.[229] Asaṅga goes even further to argue that the fact that such a person lacks faith in the Mahāyāna is in itself proof of its validity.[230]

In this way, Asaṅga turns what is presumably a fault with the Mahāyāna into a proof of its authenticity. He does not deny that the teaching of the Mahāyāna is difficult to apprehend or that its path is difficult to follow, but rather than presenting this as a shortcoming of the Mahāyāna, he presents it as an indication of its superiority. In the opening verses of the MSA, he does this by presenting three similes for the Mahāyāna. He likens it to a medicine which is bitter to smell but sweet to taste; a monarch who is hard to please, but who once pleased is the bestower of great reward; and a priceless jewel which cannot be appreciated by the unintelligent, but which gives great satisfaction to the intelligent.[231] All three analogies assume an

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228 MSA 1:14-15, 1:17.

229 MSA 1:14.

230 MSA 1:18.
hīnādhimukteḥ sunihīnadhātor hīnaiḥ sahāyaiḥ parivāritasya/ audāryagāmbhīryasudeśite 'smin dharme 'dhimuktir yadi nāsti siddhaṃ//

231 MSA 1:4-6.
āghrāyamāṇakaṭukaṃ svādurasaṃ yathauṣadhaṃ tad vat/ dharmadvayavyavasthā vyañjanato 'rtho na ca jñeyaḥ// (4)
rājeva durārādho dharmo 'ayṃ vipulagāḍagambhīraḥ/ ārādhitaś ca tad vad varaguṇadhanadāyako bhavati// (5)
ratnaṃ jātyamanarthaṃ yathā 'parīkṣakajanaṃ na toṣayati/ dharmastathāyambudhaṃ viparyayāttoṣyati tad vat// (6)

initial reluctance or difficulty in accepting the Mahāyāna. Furthermore, they take these obstacles as indications of the greatness of what lies beyond them. Nāgārjuna applies the same tactic in defending and praising the Mahāyāna. In his Ratnāvalī, for example, he writes,

> Due to the great extent and depth
> Of the Mahāyāna, it is derided
> Through ignorance by the untrained and lazy,
> Who are the foes of themselves and others.[232]

Earlier in the same text, Nāgārjuna describes the teaching of emptiness as "profound and frightening to the fearful."[233] We can see here again a strong carryover between Nāgārjuna and the early Yogācāra writers in their general stance regarding the Mahāyāna. They are concerned with the same problem (that the Mahāyāna may appear distasteful or fearsome) and they confront this problem in the same way (by attributing it to those who dislike or fear the Mahāyāna, and taking this attitude as proof of the Mahāyāna's greatness).

In the analysis thus far, we have observed the prominence of the early Yogācāra writers' defensive polemic. They display a concern with the novelty of the Mahāyāna and the establishing of its orthodoxy. In particular, they are concerned with establishing that the Mahāyāna teaching of emptiness is indeed the word of the Buddha, and that neither it nor any other

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232 Ratnāvalī v. 379.
atyaudāryātigāmbhīryādviṣaṇṇairkṛtātmabhiḥ/ nindyate 'dya mahāyānaṃ mohāt svaraparavairibhiḥ/

233 Ratnāvalī v. 396.

teaching of the Mahāyāna should be feared despite its difficulty. All the objections against which Maitreya, Asaṅga and Vasubandhu defend themselves come from the Hīnayāna and are addressed at the Mahāyāna, and all the issues which they confront entail distinguishing the Mahāyāna from the Hīnayāna. There is no indication thus far that the early Yogācāra writers defined their position within the Buddhist fold as anything other than the Mahāyāna. Furthermore, there is strong similarity between Nāgārjuna and the early Yogācāra writers in their general defensive attitude, as well as in their particular lines of defense.

III. The Early Yogācāra Writers' Critiques of Opposing Views

Thus far, we have seen the early Yogācāra writers' defensive posture against critiques of the Mahāyāna. This is paralleled by their offensive stance against groups outside the Mahāyāna. Again, they focus their attention on the Hīnayāna. In addressing the Hīnayāna from an offensive stance, the early Yogācāra writers do two things. First, they assert that the Mahāyāna is distinct from the Hīnayāna. Asaṅga does this, for example, in the introductory chapter to the MS, where he announces that the teachings which are about to be revealed in the text are not treated in the Śrāvakayāna.[234] In the first chapter of the MSA, furthermore, he argues that the Śrāvakayāna can not possibly be the same as the Mahāyāna, for if it

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234 MS Pra 4:6.

'di ltar gnas bcu po 'di dag nyan thos kyi theg pa la ni bstan par mi snang la/ theg pa chen po la ni snang ba'i phyir ro zhe na/

Citations from the MS are taken from Étienne Lamotte's La Somme du Grand Véhicule d'Asaṅga (Mahāyānasaṃgraha). 2 vols. Louvain: Université de Louvain, 1973.

were, then everyone would become Buddhas, and there would be no Śrāvakas and Pratyekabuddhas. The early Yogācāra writers' second assertion is that the Mahāyāna is superior to the Hīnayāna. In the opening verse of the MSA, Asaṅga praises the Buddha as the propounder of the Mahāyāna, and describes the Mahāyāna as the Highest Vehicle (*uttamayāna*).[235] Through this homage, Asaṅga not only proclaims the authenticity of the Mahāyāna (it is taught by the Buddha) but asserts its preeminence (it is not only great (*mahā*) in terms of its scope, it is superior (*uttama*)).

Often, the two tasks of distinguishing the Mahāyāna from the Hīnayāna and asserting the former's superiority are combined into one argument. In the first chapter of the MSA, for instance, Asaṅga lists four grounds upon which the two vehicles differ.[236] First, he says, the Śrāvakayāna is incomplete (*vaikalya*). According to Vasubandhu, this means that the Śrāvakayāna only teaches the means of developing distaste, detachment and self-deliverance: it limits its teachings to a concern for the self, while the Mahāyāna also teaches concern for others. Asaṅga's second contention is that the Śrāvakayāna is contradictory (*virodha*). Vasubandhu explains that while the Śrāvakayāna claims to lead one to perfect illumination (*samyaksaṃbodhi*), in actuality, because it only teaches a goal

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235 MSA 1:1.

arthajño 'rthavibhāvanāṃ prakurute vācā padaiś cāmalair duḥkhasyottaraṇāya duḥkhitajane kāruṇyatas tan mayaḥ/ dharmasyottamayānadeśitavidheḥ satveṣu tad gāmiṣu śliṣṭāmarthagatiṃ niruttaragatāṃ pañcātmikāṃ darśayan//

236 MSA 1:9.

vaikalyato virodhād anupāyatvāt tathāpyanupadeśāt/ na śrāvakayānam idaṃ bhavati mahayānadharmākyaṃ//

relating to the individual, it can lead only to the *parinirvāṇa* of self. The third difference said to exist between the Śrāvakayāna and Mahāyāna is that the Śrāvakayāna is not the means (*upāya*). That is to say, it is not the means to becoming a Buddha, no matter how assiduously one practices. Asaṅga's final contention is simply that the Śrāvakayāna does not consist of the same teachings as the Mahāyāna.

In the next verse, Asaṅga goes further to assert that not only are the two vehicles distinct from one another, they are mutually opposed. He lists five points of mutual contradiction (*anyonyavirodha*) between the two vehicles.[237] They are incommensurable, he says, with regard to their intention (*āśaya*), teaching (*upadeśa*), practice (*prayoga*), support (*upastambha*), and time (*kāla*). Vasubandhu explains these differences as follows. The intention, teaching, and practice in the Śrāvakayāna all center on one's own *parinirvāṇa*. The support is reduced to the provisions of merit and knowledge. And with regard to time, the Śrāvakayāna holds that three births are sufficient to attain the final goal. Without detailing the Mahāyāna views on these five points, Vasubandhu simply states that they are the inverse, and therefore the Hīnayāna is truly the inferior vehicle and is incapable of becoming the Mahāyāna.[238]

The early Yogācāra writers' distinction between the Mahāyāna and the Hīnayāna, and their assertion of the former's superiority, center on the

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237 MSA 1:10.

āsayasyopadeśasya paryogasya virodhataḥ/ upastambhasya kākasya yat hīnaṃ hīnam eva tat//

238 MSAbh 1:10.

tasmād anyonyavirodhād yad yānaṃ hīnaṃ hīnam eva tat/ na tan mahāyānaṃ bhavitum arhati/

Mahāyāna ideal of the Bodhisattva. This ideal is presented as superior in several ways. First, the Bodhisattvayāna is said to be higher in that it leads to the attainment of full Buddhahood, whereas the Śrāvakayāna and Pratyekabuddhayāna do not. In one instance, Asaṅga goes so far as to claim that the fact that the Bodhisattva aspires to Buddhahood is proof that the Mahāyāna is the Buddha's teaching. Vasubandhu demonstrates this as follows: The Mahāyāna teaches the path to Buddhahood whereas the Śrāvakayāna does not. This means that if it were not for the Mahāyāna, a Buddha could never have arisen. Therefore, the Mahāyāna must be authentic. Furthermore, if there had been no Mahāyāna, and hence no Buddha, the Śrāvakayāna could not have been taught.[239] In this argument, a pattern appears which is often evident in early Yogācāra discussions of the Mahāyāna. The impetus for this particular argument is the questionable authority of the Mahāyāna teachings. By the end of the argument, however, Asaṅga and Vasubandhu have turned the tables, and concluded by asserting that the Śrāvakayāna is dependent upon the Mahāyāna. Thus, as we have seen in previous passages, what begins as a defense of the Mahāyāna ends up being an assertion of its superiority relative to the Śrāvakayāna.

Asaṅga uses the fact that the Bodhisattva aspires to full Buddhahood

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239 MSAbh 1:7.

bhāvābhāve 'bhāvād yadi mahāyānaṃ kiṃcid asti tasya bhāva siddham idaṃ buddhavacanam ato 'nyasya mahāyānasyābhāvāt| atha nāsti tasyābhāve śrāvakayānasyāpy abhāvāt| śrāvakayānaṃ buddhavacanaṃ na mahāyānam iti na yujyate vinā buddhayānena buddhānām anutpādāt|

In this passage, Asaṅga implies that the Mahāyāna Dharma pre-existed the Buddha. As the true dharma (*saddharma*), the Mahāyāna does not depend of the Buddhas for its arising. It is simply the state of things as they are which the Buddha came to realize. The Śrāvakayāna, on the other hand, is a version of this reality which is adapted to accord with the limited capacities of its listeners. It is the creation of the Buddha and hence is entirely dependent upon him for its arising.

to distance the figure of the Buddha from the Śrāvakas and Pratyekabuddhas. He repeatedly contrasts the full spiritual attainment of the Buddha with the limited attainments to which the Śrāvakas and Pratyekabuddhas aspire. In discussing the Buddha's eighteen distinctive attributes (*āveṇika buddhadharma*), for example, Asaṅga praises the Buddha with the following verses: "By your action, your acquisition, your wisdom and your acts, you surpass all Śrāvakas and Pratyekabuddhas. Homage to you!"[240] Even further, Asaṅga uses the ideal of Buddhahood to depict the Hīnayāna as a pitfall in the quest for spiritual attainment. He states: "Against all the calamities, against hellish rebirths, against unskillful means, against materialism and against the Hīnayāna, [Buddhahood] is the supreme refuge."[241] Asaṅga's depiction of the Hīnayāna as an obstacle to Buddhahood closely resembles passages in the writings of Nāgārjuna. Nāgārjuna asserts, for example,

> While falling into hell (*niraya*) does not afford an absolute hindrance (*atyantavighna*) to *bodhi*, it is in fact an absolute hindrance to fall into the lands of the Śrāvakas and Pratyekabuddhas.
> Just as it is said that people who love life are afraid to have their head cut off [thus] the lands of the Śrāvakas and Pratyekabuddhas ought to evoke similar fear.[242]

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240 MSA 21:57 and MS 10:24.
cāreṇādhigamenāpi jñānenāpi ca karmaṇā/ sarva śrāvakapratyekabuddhottama namo 'stu te//

241 MSA 9:8.
upadravebhyaḥ sarvebhyo apāyād anupāyataḥ/ satkāyāddhīnayānācca tasmāc charaṇam uttamam//

242 Bodhisambhāra 26-27. Although the Bodhisambhāra is preserved only in Chinese, Christian Lindtner has found a quotation of verse 26 in Asvabhāva's

In identifying the Mahāyāna with the goal of Buddhahood, Nāgārjuna and the early Yogācāra writers appropriate the figure of the Buddha, and relegate the ideal of becoming an arhat or Pratyekabuddha to either a mere stage along the path to full spiritual realization, or worse, as an obstacle along that path.

The Bodhisattva is depicted as superior to the Śrāvakas not only because he seeks the attainment of full Buddhahood, but because in so doing, he seeks the enlightenment of all sentient beings. The early Yogācāra writers regard the Bodhisattva's aspiration for universal liberation as a second manifestation of the Mahāyāna's supremacy. Again, this goal and the practice aiming toward it are presented in contrast to the Hīnayāna. In his commentary to the MV, for instance, Vasubandhu tells us that whereas Śrāvakas and Pratyekabuddhas meditate upon their own life streams, Bodhisattvas meditate upon their own and those of others.[243] Elsewhere, Vasubandhu marvels at the qualities required to fulfill the Bodhisattva's goal of universal liberation, remarking that "the Bodhisattva who has taken on the burden of responsibility for all beings ...requires one-hundred times more vigor than a Śrāvaka....."[244] The Mahāyāna's superiority in terms of its

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Mahāyānasamgrahopanibandhana, 329b 1-2: *dmyal bar 'gro ba byang chub la// gtan adu bgegs byed ma yin gyi// rang sangs rgyas kyi sa dang ni// nyan thos sa day bgegs byed do//* (Lindtner, Christian. Nagarjuniana: Studies in the Writings and Philosophy of Nāgārjuna. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1982, p. 231).

243 MVbh 3:22a. (The Sanskrit edition of the MV and MVbh from which I will draw is that by Nagao (1964).)

244 MSAbh 4:28.
śirasi mahāntaṃ satvabhāraṃ vinidhāya bodhisattvaḥ śithilaṃ parākramamāṇo na śobhate śataguṇaṃ hi sa vīryaṃ kartumarhati śrāvakavīryāt

concern for all beings is also discussed in the final chapter of the MV. In this chapter, which is devoted to establishing the supremacy of the Mahāyāna, the question is raised as to why certain higher practices are taught in the Mahāyāna, but are not spoken of in scriptures of the Śrāvakayāna. The response given is that the Mahāyāna is distinctive (*viśeṣa*) and inexhaustible (*akṣaya*). Vasubandhu explains that the Mahāyāna is distinctive in its concern for others, and it is inexhaustible in that it rests not in nirvāṇa, but returns continually to saṃsāra.[245]

The Bodhisattva not only goes back and forth between saṃsāra and nirvāṇa, but comes to realize that there is no real distinction between the two. The attainment of this non-discriminative wisdom is presented by the early Yogācāra writers as a third way in which the Bodhisattva surpasses the Śrāvaka and Pratyekabuddha. In the MV, the Śrāvakayāna, Pratyekabuddhayāna and Bodhisattvayāna are defined and contrasted in terms of the knowledge upon which they are based:

> Liberation relying on oneself or others, [liberation] through the knowledge of good qualities and faults, and [liberation] through knowledge free from discriminations: It is thus that the meaning of the vehicles should be known.[246]

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tathā hi svaparabandhanair vividhair atyartham baddhaḥ kleśakarmajanmasvabhāvaiḥ//

245 MVbh 5:10.
parānugrahavṛttivād viśiṣṭatvaṃ/ parinirvvāṇe 'py aśmāt/ anuparamād akṣayatvaṃ veditavyaṃ/

246 MV 3:22a.
guṇadoṣāvikalpena jñānena parataḥ svayaṃ/ niryāṇād aparaṃ jñeyaṃ//

Vasubandhu explains these verses as follows: In the Pratyekabuddhayāna, one learns about the good qualities of nirvāṇa and the faults of saṃsāra by himself, and through this knowledge gains liberation from saṃsāra. In the Śrāvakayāna, one hears these teachings from others, and thus gains liberation. In the Mahāyāna, knowledge free from discriminations arises by itself, and through this knowledge liberation is gained.[247]

The Bodhisattva's non-discriminative wisdom arises from his complete insight into the nature of emptiness. As with the Bodhisattva's other accomplishments, the early Yogācāra writers contrast his insight regarding emptiness to the inferior understanding of the Śrāvakas and Pratyekabuddhas. Numerous times, the early Yogācāra writers tell us that the Bodhisattva goes beyond the apprehension that the individual (*pudgala*) is devoid of selfhood (*atmya*), to the realization that all dharmas are devoid of self, i.e., they are empty (*śūnya*).[248] This insight into emptiness is regarded as the most significant way in which the Bodhisattva's wisdom is both unique and unsurpassed. Indeed, it can be seen as the basis of the Bodhisattva's other superior qualities which were discussed above. Once one understands that everything is empty, i.e., devoid of any intrinsic characteristics whatsoever, discriminations such as that between saṃsāra and nirvāṇa, or between oneself and others, dissolves. Thus, from within the perspective of emptiness, the Bodhisattva has no reason to abandon saṃsāra

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247 MVbh 3:22a. For a translation and the Sansrit of this verse, see below, n. 290.

248 See, for example, MS 3:15.

in favor of nirvāṇa, nor does he have any basis to distinguish the attainment of his own enlightenment from that of all other beings.

Asaṅga explains the Bodhisattva's insight into emptiness in terms of the concept of the revolution of the basis (*āśrayaparāvṛtti*). The idea of revolution of the basis is central to Yogācāra accounts of spiritual liberation.[249] Among the different types of revolution which Asaṅga defines is the inferior revolution (*hīnāparāvṛtti*) of the Śrāvaka, which involves penetrating (*pratividhyanti*) only the non-substantiality of the self (*pudgalanairātmya*), and which turns its back completely on saṃsāra and abandons it completely. Asaṅga contrasts this type of revolution with the superior revolution (*viśālaparāvṛtti*) of the Bodhisattvas, which penetrates the non-substantiality of dharmas (*dharmanairatmya*), and considers saṃsāra as if it were calm. In this type of revolution, the Bodhisattva transcends defilements (*saṃkleśa*), but he does not abandon saṃsāra.[250] Because of his superior wisdom, he is able to engage in the world as the Buddha did, and to work toward bringing other beings to enlightenment.

While the teaching of emptiness is most closely associated by scholars of Buddhism with the Madhyamaka school, the early Yogācāra writers clearly see it as central to the Mahāyāna Dharma more generally. Indeed, as we saw in the previous section, they are wary that the Mahāyāna as a whole may be rejected by some Buddhists because of its teaching of emptiness. When presenting the teaching of emptiness, the early Yogācāra writers are careful to assert that the Mahāyāna does not teach a doctrine of nihilism.

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249 For a discussion of the centrality and the meaning of *āsrayaparavṛtti* in Yogācāra thought, see Nagao's article, "Connotations of the Word Āśraya (Basis) in the Mahāyāna-Sūtrālaṃkara," in Nagao (1991).

250 MS 9:2.

They even take a step further, and turn this potential criticism into an attack of opposing views. In chapter eleven of the MSA, for example, Asaṅga explains that the arguments which he has just presented regarding existence and non-existence are put forth to avoid the philosophical extremes of reification (*samāropa*) and over-negation (*apavāda*). He explicitly associates both of these extremes with the Śrāvakayāna.[251] In his commentary to the MV, Vasubandhu characterizes the teaching of the text as lying between the extremes of nihilism and eternalism. He goes on to associate the extreme of nihilism with the Śrāvakas: To say that matter is eternal (*nitya*) is an extreme of the heretics (*tīrthika*-s), he says, and to say that it is non-eternal (*anitya*) is an extreme of the Śrāvakas.[252] To avoid these extremes, there is the middle path which does not regard matter or anything else as either eternal or non-eternal.

One would think that if the early Yogācāra writers were aware of Nāgārjuna or the Madhyamaka school as such, and they regarded their teachings as over-negating, the passages we have just examined would be obvious places for them to criticize the Mādhyamikas directly. Instead, they attribute the fault of over-negation to the Śrāvakas. Indeed, neither here nor anywhere in the writings which are unambiguously attributed to them do the early Yogācāra writers refer to Nāgārjuna or the Madhyamaka school as such.

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251 MSA 11:23.
samāropāpavādābhapratiṣedhārtham iṣyate/ hīnayānena yānasya pratiṣedhārtham eva ca/

252 MVbh 5:23.
nityaṃ rūpam iti tīrthikāntaḥ/ anityam iti śrāvakāntaḥ/ tatparivarjanārthaṃ madhyamā pratipad yā rūpādīnāṃ na nityapratyavekṣā nānityapratyavekṣā/

There are several ways to explain this fact. The first possibility is that the early Yogācāra writers saw Nāgārjuna as belonging to the Hīnayāna, and thus included him in their critiques of the Hīnayāna's over-negating tendencies. This seems unlikely. As we have seen, one of the main grounds upon which the early Yogācāra writers distinguish the Mahāyāna from the Hīnayāna is the former's teaching of the emptiness of dharmas, a position which Nāgārjuna is famed for expounding. Furthermore, Nāgārjuna, as do the early Yogācāra writers, cites texts which are clearly associated with the Mahāyāna. For these reasons, it is unlikely that the early Yogācāra writers would place him outside the Mahāyāna.[253] The fact that Nāgārjuna draws

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[253] In 1973, A.K. Warder suggested that Nāgārjuna was not a Mahāyānist since he does not explicitly mention any Mahāyāna texts in the Mūlamadhyamakakārikās (MMK) or any of his other texts associated which are closely associated with this one (Warder, A.K. "Is Nāgārjuna a Mahāyānist?" in M. Sprung, ed. The Problem of Two Truths in Buddhism and Vedānta. Boston: D. Reidel Publishing Co., 1973).

Although Warder's argument has found some support (e.g.. Ian Harris (1991) p. 60), it has not gained wide acceptance among modern scholars. There are certain continuities between Nāgārjuna's writings and those of the Hīnayāna. David Kalupahana, for example, has shown the close connection between the writings of Nāgārjuna and the Kaccāyanagotta-sutta (Nāgārjuna: The Philosophy of the Middle Way. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1986). Despite these textual continuities with the Hīnayāna, however, Warder's exclusion of Nāgārjuna from the Mahāyāna is problematic.

Warder's argument does not take into account elements in Nāgārjuna's writings such as the strong parallels between the Aṣṭasahāsrikāprajñāpāramitā (APP) and the MMK. These parallels have been pointed out in detail by Andrew Rawlinson, who has compiled a list of parallels between the APP and MMK. This list shows similarities in the general structures of the texts, as well as close parallels between specific passages dealing with dependent co-origination, the personality, nirvāṇa, language and truth. Rawlinson also notes a number of similes which are used in both texts. (See, "The Position of the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā* in the Development of Early Mahāyāna," in Lewis Lancaster, ed. Prajñāpāramitā and Related Systems: Studies in Honor of Edward Conze. Berkeley: Berkeley Buddhist Studies Series, 1977.)

In addition, Winternitz notes that verse 27 of the VIG is very similar to APP Chap. 1 (Winternitz, Maurice. History of Indian Literature. Delhi: Motilal

from early Mahāyāna texts as well as the Buddhist Āgamas also renders unlikely the second possibility that the early Yogācāra writers saw Nāgārjuna as non-Buddhist, and thus included their critique of Nāgārjuna with their arguments against the heretical dialecticians. A third explanation could be that although the early Yogācāra writers did find serious fault with Nāgārjuna's writings, as a matter of literary convention, they did not refer to Nāgārjuna by name. This explanation, although the most likely of the three, does not fully explain the early Yogācāra writers' silence concerning the Madhyamaka: even though explicit reference to particular authors is extremely rare in the philosophical literature of their time, it would not have defied convention for the early Yogācāra writers to refer to particular texts, passages of texts, or a particular school of thought.

Granted, an argument by lack of evidence can not in itself be a proof.[254] But given that the early Yogācāra writers did recognize distinctions within the Buddhist tradition and that they felt free to criticize opposing Buddhist views, the lack of mention of Nāgārjuna or his work suggests that they were not concerned with undermining his views, or even that they were not aware of the Madhyamaka as a distinct Buddhist group.[255] As we have seen, the early Yogācāra writers were conscious of a

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Banarsidass, vol. 2, 1983, p. 306).

Warder's suggestion that Nāgārjuna did not belong to the Mahāyāna also fails to consider the fact that Nāgārjuna's Ratnāvalī refers at length to the Mahāyāna, especially in chapter four, which contains a defense of the Mahāyāna.

For a further discussion regarding Nāgārjuna's position within the Mahāyāna, see Ruegg (1981) pp. 6-7 and Lindtner (1982) pp. 260-264.

254 For a brief argument regarding the limitations of an *argumentum ex silentio*, see above, p. 58.

255 There is reason to doubt that the use of the terms Madhyamaka or Mādhyamika to designate a school of thought had begun by Asaṅga's time. Neither term is found in either the body of works attributed to Nāgārjuna or

division within the Buddhist tradition, i.e., the division between the Hīnayāna and the Mahāyāna, and they saw this division as being based upon meaningful differences in thought and practice between the two vehicles. Even further, the early Yogācāra writers go to great lengths to define these differences and to proclaim the independence as well as the superiority of the Mahāyāna.

The grounds upon which the early Yogācāra writers distinguish the Mahāyāna from the Hīnayāna, and assert the former's superiority --the Bodhisattva's quest to attain full Buddhahood, his concern for the welfare of all sentient beings, his lack of discrimination between saṃsāra and nirvāṇa, and his insight into the emptiness of all dharmas-- are common to the Madhyamaka and Yogācāra alike. All this evidence taken together strongly suggests that if the early Yogācāra writers were aware of Nāgārjuna, they saw him as a fellow commentator on Buddhist literature, and did not regard him as the founder of a clearly defined position which differed from their own. In other words, they did not see Nāgārjuna as the systematizer of a new philosophical school or subsect within the Mahāyāna, nor did they seek to establish themselves as a group separate from the Mahāyāna as a whole.

The early Yogācāra writers' defensive and offensive stances against Buddhist opponents is integrally connected with their own self-definition as

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those of his primary disciple, Āryadeva. Evidence for the earliest appearance of the term Madhyamaka comes from the title of Buddhapālita's commentary to the MMK, the dBu ma rca ba'i 'grel pa (Skt. Madhyamakavṛtti). Since this text exists only in its Tibetan translation, however, we can not be sure that the original Sanskrit text was given this title. Although Nāgārjuna's most famous work is referred to as the Madhyamakavṛtti, this title comes not from the original text itself (which has been lost), but from Candrakīrti's commentary on this text, the Prasannapadā Madhyamakavṛttiḥ (c. 650 CE.) Nāgārjuna himself uses the terms "śūnyatāvādin" to designate followers of the doctrine which he propounds (E.g., Vigrahavyāvartanī 69 and Vaidalyaprakaraṇa 1).

a distinct group. Their polemic is both a reflection of their view of the Mahāyāna as superior to the Hīnayāna, and a means for them to promote the Mahāyāna over and against the Hīnayāna. In the passages we have examined, the early Yogācāra writers are involved in several projects simultaneously: first, they are constructing clear grounds for distinguishing between the Mahāyāna and the Hīnayāna; second, in examining the grounds upon which the two groups differ, they are attempting to demonstrate the superiority of the Mahāyāna; finally, through both of these, they are defining their own stance as they see it fitting into the religious landscape of their time. In all three of these projects, the early Yogācāra writers are in compliance with the writings of Nāgārjuna. Indeed, their overwhelming concern with the distinction between the Hīnayāna and the Mahāyāna would seem to exclude the possibility of their seeking to define or to oppose alternate viewpoints within the Mahāyāna.

IV. Mahāyāna as an Ideological Category

In their defense of the Mahāyāna and attack upon the Hīnayāna, the early Yogācāra writers had ample literary precedent to follow: the polemic which they present appears throughout, and is even perhaps the defining characteristic of the early Mahāyāna scriptures. Paul Harrison, looking at eleven early Mahāyāna texts which were translated into Chinese in the second half of the 2nd century CE, remarks that the most outstanding characteristic of the early Mahāyāna literature is its extreme defensiveness: "The texts fairly groan under the weight of their own self-glorification, and kalpas can tick by while one wades through chapter after chapter

proclaiming the merits of this doctrine or that practice."[256] Together with this defensive attitude are numerous passages "excoriating the detractors of the new teachings, usually portrayed as idle and perverse monks who, when they are not busy spreading base calumnies and lies about the Mahāyāna, are out breaking the precepts."[257] The highly polemic nature of the early Mahāyāna *sūtras* is noted by a number of other modern authors, including Leon Hurvitz, who writes that each of the early Mahāyāna scriptures appears to have been "presenting itself as a self-contained rival to the *entire* Tripiṭaka...."[258]

The early Yogācāra writers' sensitivity to outside critique resembles not only the early Mahāyāna writings in general, but the writings of Nāgārjuna specifically. In his Ratnāvalī, for example, Nāgārjuna claims that "Disliked by the bewildered, the Mahāyāna is derided."[259] He goes on to warn the reader that "the wise should extinguish any hatred for the Mahāyāna."[260] The early Yogācāra writers resemble Nāgārjuna both in

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256 Harrison, p. 81.

257 Harrison, p. 81.

258 Scripture of the Lotus Blossom of the Fine Dharma, New York: Columbia University Press, 1976, p. xvi.

Hurvitz's description, although it certainly applies to the highly polemical Lotus-sūtra, and to "cult of the book" texts in general, is perhaps a little too strong for some early Mahāyāna texts. As we shall discuss below, a number of early Mahāyāna *sūtras* display a marked ambivalence regarding the scriptural corpus of the Hīnayāna.

259 Ratnāvalī v. 367.

bodhisattvasya saṃbhāro mahāyāne tathāgataiḥ/ nirdiṣṭaḥ sa tu saṃmūḍaiḥ pradviṣṭaś caiva nindyate// See also vs. 368-370.

260 Ratnāvalī v. 397.

iti sadbhir mahāyāne kartavyaḥ pratighakṣyaḥ/ prasādaś cādhikaḥ kāryaḥ samyaksaṃbodhisiddhaye//

their general defensive stance regarding the Mahāyāna, and, as we have seen, in the particular issues with regard to which they defend the Mahāyāna as well, i.e., its novelty, its orthodoxy, and its teaching of emptiness.

The picture which both the early Mahāyāna *sūtras* and the writings of Nāgārjuna and the early Yogācāra writers present is one of vigorous opposition from the Hīnayāna. There remains the question, however, as to whether the Mahāyānists were actually under attack from the Hīnayāna. This question is particularly compelling, given the paucity of attacks in Hīnayāna literature. André Bareau goes so far as to assert that not one work of the Hīnayāna even mentions the Mahāyāna by name.[261] In examining the implications of the Mahāyāna literature's defensive nature, it is necessary to address the question of how one uses polemics as real history. If indeed there were no attacks coming from the Hīnayāna, one may interpret the rhetoric of being persecuted along some other lines, such as its forcefulness in community formation.

At the same time, one should be cautious in dismissing entirely the Mahāyāna polemic as a literary construction which distorts historical fact. Certain indications of Hīnayāna aggression toward the Mahāyāna can be found in the literature composed around or near after the time of Asaṅga and Vasubandhu. As we saw above in the Dīpa,[262] for instance, the author criticizes Vasubandhu for his philosophical views simply by accusing him of having begun to enter the portals of the *vaitulika-śāstra* (i.e., the Mahāyāna

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261 Bareau (1955) p. 299.

262 The Dīpa is believed to have been composed between 450-500 CE. (Jaini (1958) p. 50. See also Nakamura (1980) p. 112.)

scriptures),[263] and of heading for the precipice of *ayoga-śūnyatā*. Later he calls the Kośakāra an *ayogaśūnyatāvādin* and an annihilationalist (*vaināśika*) who maintains that neither the present, past nor the future exist.[264] In these passages, the Mahāyāna is treated as categorically objectionable: merely labeling something as Mahāyāna is a means of dismissing it.[265] This would seem to indicate that among certain Buddhists, the accusation that a certain teaching belonged to the Mahāyāna was in itself a rejection of its authority.

Whether Hīnayāna monks truly were actively opposing the early Mahāyāna is a question we simply do not have sufficient evidence to answer. Although we need to be cautious of interpreting polemics literally, we do not have to dismiss them entirely. They are important in that they reveal the concerns of writers putting them forward. Thus, although we do not know whether the Hīnayāna monks were actually attacking the Mahāyāna, we do know that the early Mahāyāna writers were concerned with promoting the as a valid vehicle. At a minimum, this deep concern seems to indicate that the Mahāyāna was not yet a firmly established movement within the Buddhist Tradition. As Paul Harrison remarks, the early Mahāyāna "...gives every appearance of being a minority movement

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263 *samādhibalena karmajaṃ jīvitāvedhaṃ nirvartya āyuḥ saṃskārādhiṣṭhānajam āyur na vipākaḥ'iti kośakāraḥ/ tatra kim uttaram iti... vaitulikaśāstrapraveśadvāram ārabdhaṃ tena bhadantenety adhyupeksyam etat* (Fol. 49a). (From Jaini (1958) p. 51.)

264 *Yaḥ sarvāstivādākhyaḥ... sadvādī/ tad anye dārṣṭāntika vaitulikapaudgalikāḥ... lokāyatikavaināśikanagnāṭapakṣe prakṣeptavyāḥ* Fo. 108a (From Jaini (1958) p. 52.)

265 *vaitulikaḥ kalpayati yat pratītyasamyutpannaṃ tat svabhāvān na vidyate/ yat khalu niḥsvabhāvaṃ nirātmakaṃ hetūn pratītya jāyate tasya khalu svabhāvo nāsti... tasmād alātacakravan niḥsvabhāvatvāt sarvadharmā nitātmāna iti/ taṃ praty apadiṣyate.* Fol. 111a (From Jaini (1958) p. 52.)

struggling to maintain the authenticity and validity of its teachings with a truly prodigious degree of polemical 'overkill.'"[266]

This picture corresponds with the historical evidence we have regarding the development of the Mahāyāna. As we discussed in the previous chapter, this evidence indicates that at the time the early Mahāyāna scriptures were composed, the Mahāyāna was strongly dependent on the Hīnayāna, and did not exist yet as a large scale popular movement. Even by the late fourth and early fifth centuries, at the time of the early Yogācāra, the Mahāyāna appears to have been just beginning to establish itself as an independent monastic institution.[267] Speaking in general of the dichotomy between the Hīnayāna and the Mahāyāna, Richard Cohen remarks that "on the one hand, the division of Indian Buddhism into two mutually exclusive 'species' compels analytic precision; on the other hand, the complex history of those *yānas*' interactions belies that design."[268] Cohen, as well as Jeffrey Samuels, identifies passages in the writings of Asaṅga as prime examples of an oversimplified dyadic model of the Buddhist Tradition. Cohen describes Asaṅga's polemic as "seductive, suggesting that the distinction between the Great and Little Vehicles is thoroughgoing, and thus that a comprehensive set of criteria can be formulated through which to distinguish them."[269]

Like Cohen, Samuels questions the historical accuracy of this type of polemic. Samuels focuses in particular on the dichotomy which early

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266 Harrison, p. 86.

267 For a discussion and bibliographic references regarding the dates of the arising of the Mahāyāna, see above, Chap. 3 Sect. V.

268 Cohen, p. 4.

269 Cohen, p. 3.

Mahāyāna writers draw between the Hīnayāna as the vehicle of Śrāvakas on the one hand, and the Mahāyāna as the vehicle of Bodhisattvas on the other. He points to Asaṅga and Nāgārjuna as two of the primary writers propounding this dichotomy. As we have seen above, Asaṅga equates the Mahāyāna with the Bodhisattvayāna. Likewise Nāgārjuna makes a similar association. In his Ratnāvalī, he asks rhetorically,

> Since all the aspirations, deeds and
> Dedications of Bodhisattvas
> Were not explained in the Hearers' vehicle, how then
> Could one become a Bodhisattva through its
> path?[270]

The implication here is that the only way of becoming a Bodhisattva (and eventually a Buddha) is through the Mahāyāna. For both Nāgārjuna and Asaṅga, the superiority of the Bodhisattva over the Śrāvaka is proof of the Mahāyāna's superiority.

According to Samuels, a major problem with the dichotomy which Nāgārjuna and Asaṅga present is that it is based upon an opposition between an ideology and an institutional affiliation. He explains this point as follows:

> Rather than comparing an ideology with an ideology (Bodhisattva and *śrāvaka*) or a Buddhist school with another Buddhist school, this opposition contrasts one ideology (arhantship through following the *śrāvaka-yāna*) with an

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270 Ratnāvalī v. 390.

na bodhisattvapraṇidhirna caryāpariṇāmanā/ uktāḥ śrāvakayāne'smād bodhisattvaḥ kutas tataḥ//

institutional affiliation (Mahāyāna Buddhism).[271]

Samuels goes on to cite numerous examples of Theravādin Buddhists in Śri Lanka, Burma and Thailand who have adopted the ideology of the Bodhisattva. Samuels' argument clearly demonstrates that Buddhist history belies the simple opposition between the Hīnayāna as the Śrāvakayāna and the Mahāyāna as the Bodhisattvayāna.

Regarding the implications of the incomensurability between Asaṅga and Nāgārjuna's dyadic model on the one hand, and the actual history of the Buddhist Tradition on the other, I differ from Samuels. According to Samuels, the basic problem lies within the model, and its conflation of institutions and ideologies. Contrary to Samuels, however, I would argue that the basic problem lies in our literal interpretation of the model to attempt to unravel Buddhist history. In interpreting the discourse of Nāgārjuna and Asaṅga's writings, the terms Mahāyāna and Hīnayāna should be taken as ideological rather than institutional categories. The model of the Buddhist Tradition which Asaṅga and Vasubandhu present is ideological in nature. Although it serves as an indicator of the issues with which they were concerned, it is not a representation of historical fact.

This chapter concerns itself almost exclusively with uncovering the conceptual map which the early Yogācāra writers had of the Buddhist tradition and their place within it. I am not concerned primarily with how this map corresponds to historical fact, but in how it relates to the philosophical ideas presented by the early Yogācāra writers, as well as the biographical literature relating to them. Even if the early Yogācāra writers

271 Samuels, p. 401.

were simply reiterating the rhetoric of earlier Mahāyāna texts as a matter of style or convention, we can not ignore the fact that they present the Mahāyāna as a unified whole which is defined in opposition to the Hīnayāna. In presenting this model, they reduce the Hīnayāna and Mahāyāna to ideal types. Given this ideological depiction which the early Yogācāra writers present of the Buddhist Tradition, it is difficult to imagine that they were either defining themselves as a separate philosophical school within the Mahāyāna, or writing in opposition to any other such group.

V. Early Yogācāra Models for Internal Diversity

While the early Yogācāra writers draw a clear hierarchical distinction between the Hīnayāna and the Mahāyāna, they do not dismiss the Hīnayāna altogether. They deride the Hīnayāna, but they never deny that the Śrāvakas or Pratyekabuddhas are Buddhist, or that their texts are the Buddha's teachings. The question of whether the Hīnayāna comes from the Buddha is never raised: its orthodoxy is taken for granted. In their attitude toward the Hīnayāna, the early Yogācāra writers fall in line with the Mahāyāna literature which preceded them. As Paul Harrison remarks, "the Mahāyāna takes a hard line against other faiths, in theory at any rate, but its attitude to the rest of the Buddhist fold is characterized by ambivalence and defensiveness...."[272]

The general stance which the early Yogācāra writers adopt is that the Mahāyāna includes the Hīnayāna, and goes beyond it. The Bodhisattva, representative of the Mahāyāna, is portrayed as surpassing the Śrāvakas and

272 Harrison, p. 86.

Pratyekabuddhas in a number of ways: whereas Śrāvakas and Pratyekabuddhas are concerned with their own spiritual welfare only, Bodhisattvas are concerned with the spiritual welfare of all sentient beings;[273] whereas the Śrāvakas and Pratyekabuddhas purify the obscuration of corruption, the Bodhisattvas purify the obscuration of corruption and the obscuration of the knowable;[274] whereas Śrāvakas and Pratyekabuddhas understand only the emptiness of the self, Bodhisattvas understand both the emptiness of self and of dharmas;[275] and whereas the Śrāvakas and Pratyekabuddhas are content to stop short of full spiritual attainment, Bodhisattvas pursue the attainment of Buddhahood.[276]

The inclusivist model which the early Yogācāra writers present appears throughout the early Mahāyāna scriptures. The Prajñāpāramitā-Ratnagunasamcayagātha, for example, states that

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273 See, for e.g.. MSAbh 4:28 (quoted above, p. x).

274 See, for e.g.. BBh p. 3.

tatra sarvaśrāvakapratyekabuddhānāṃ tad gotraṃ kleśāvaraṇa viśuddhyā viśudhyati na taj jñeyāvaraṇaviśuddhyā/ bodhisattvagotraṃ punar api kleśāvaraṇaviśuddhyā 'pi jñeyāvaraṇaviśuddhyā viśuddhyā viśudhyati/

Quotations of the BBh are taken from Unrai Wogihara's edition, Bodhisattvabhūmi: A Statement of Whole Course of the Bodhisattva (Being Fifteenth Section of Yogācārabhūmi.) Tokyo, 1930.

275 See, for e.g., MS 3:15.

nyan thos rnams kyi mngon par rtogs pa gang yin pa dang/ byang chub sems dpa' rnams kyi mngon par rtogs pa gang yin pa 'di gnyis bye brag ci yod ce na/ nyan thos kyi mngon par rtogs pa las khyad par bcus byang chub sems dpa'i mngon par rtogs pa khyad par du 'phags par blta bar bya ste/ ...rtogs pa'i khyad par ni/ gang zag dang chos la bdag med par rtogs pa'i phyir ro/

In this passage, Asaṅga lists nine other ways in which the comprehension (*abhisamaya*) of the Boshisattva is superior to that of the Śrāvaka.

276 See, for e.g., MSA 1:7 (quoted above, p. x), and MSAbh 1:9 (quoted above, p. x)

> In all the qualities of the Disciples and likewise of the Pratyekabuddhas,
> the wise Bodhisattva becomes trained:
> but he does not stand in them, nor does he long for them.
> 'In that [also] should I be trained,' [he thinks]. In that sense he trains himself [in them].[277]

The implication here is that the Śrāvakayāna and Pratyekabuddhayāna serve as preparation for, or stages along the Bodhisattvayāna. This model of spiritual progression recurs throughout the writings of Asaṅga and Vasubandhu, and, moreover, appears in their biographies. Paramārtha records, for example, that Asaṅga first learned the doctrine of emptiness as taught by the Hīnayāna, but was not satisfied until he learned the Mahāyāna doctrine of emptiness. Later, when Asaṅga ascended to Tuṣita heaven to learn the entire Mahāyāna teachings from Maitreya, he did so using meditative techniques taught by the Hīnayāna. More generally, the biographers record that Asaṅga and Vasubandhu began their religious careers in the Hīnayāna, and later converted to the Mahāyāna. Apart from

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277 Prajñāpāramitā-Ratnaguṇasaṃcayagātha 25:6, p. 56 in Edward Conze's The Perfection of Wisdom in Eight Thousand Lines and its Verse Summary. Bolinas, CA: Four Seasons Foundation, 1973.

The same basic model in which the Bodhisattvas surpass the Arhats and the Pratyekabuddhas also appears throughout the APP. We are told, for example, that the Bodhisattva trains in the Śrāvakayāna, but he never intends to continue with that path or to make it his own. He "assimilates" the qualities of the Śrāvakas without opposing them. As he nears the perfection of wisdom, the Bodhisattva keeps away from the paths of the Śrāvaka and Pratyekabuddha (Conze, Edward. The Perfection of Wisdom in Eight Thousand Lines and its Verse Summary. Bolinas, CA: Four Seasons Foundation, 1973, p. 253).

the question of the historical accuracy of these biographical details, of significance in the context this discussion is the way in which these details are presented. The Hīnayāna is portrayed as clearly inferior to the Mahāyāna, but it is not rejected. In certain cases, such as Asaṅga's quest to see Maitreya, the practices of the Hīnayāna are presented as useful, perhaps even as necessary, in the progression toward mastering the teachings of the Mahāyāna.

In the early Yogācāra writings, a strong reliance on the Hīnayāna is evident from the numerous citations which are drawn from the Hīnayāna canon. Indeed, the early Yogācāra writings even appeal to the Hīnayāna scriptures to validate certain teachings which are associated specifically with the Yogācāra. For instance, Asaṅga defends the authenticity of the concept of the *ālayavijñāna* by asserting that the Buddha presented this teaching in the Śrāvakayāna through synonyms (*paryāya*). Asaṅga cites a number of passages from the Āgamas of schools such as the Mahāsāṃghikas and Mahīśāsakas where, he says, the *ālayavijñāna* is referred to through synonyms such as root consciousness (*mūlavijñāna*), or aggregate which endures throughout saṃsāra (*āsaṃsārikaskandha*).[278]

In order to maintain the continuity between the scriptural corpus of the Hīnayāna and the Mahāyāna, while also asserting the separateness and superiority of the Mahāyāna, the early Yogācāra writers need to explain how there can exist more than one body of religious teachings, and how, for those texts or teachings which are common to both canons, there can exist different interpretations. Stated more simply, they need to make sense of the range of views within the Buddhist tradition. This task is most immediately

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278 MS 1:11-13.

incumbent upon them when they are defending the orthodoxy of Mahāyāna concepts such as the *ālayavijñāna*, which are relatively new (at least in terms of their explicit inclusion in the scriptural corpus).

Keeping with his model of the Hīnayāna as a precursor to the Mahāyāna, Asaṅga explains that the Buddha did not teach the *ālayavijñāna* directly to the Śrāvakas, because they were not capable of understanding it. To the Bodhisattvas, however, whose goal is omniscience, the Buddha made explicit what he had only hinted at to the Śrāvakas. With this explanation, Asaṅga is able to maintain the superiority of the Mahāyāna, while appealing to the authority of the scriptures of the Hīnayāna to establish the orthodoxy of the Mahāyāna teachings. The early Yogācāra writers reclaim the scriptures, asserting that the Mahāyāna interpretation of them is the correct one. By finding the nascent forms of Mahāyāna teachings in the Hīnayāna scriptures Asaṅga is able to go so far as to assert, as we saw above, that the Mahāyāna arose at the same time as the Śrāvakayāna.[279]

Nāgārjuna also frequently appeals to the authority of the Hīnayāna, finding teachings therein which only later became fully explicit in the Mahāyāna. In his Ratnāvalī, for example, Nāgārjuna defends the authenticity of the Mahāyāna notion of the six perfections by asserting that

> The aims of benefiting oneself and others and the meaning
> Of liberation as briefly taught [in the Hīnayāna]
> By Buddha are contained in the six perfections,
> Therefore, the Mahāyāna is the word of Buddha.[280]

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279 MSA 1:7.

280 Ratnāvalī v. 382.
parātmahita mokṣārthāḥ saṃkṣepād buddhaśāsanam/ te

Here, Nāgārjuna displays the same concern that the early Yogācāra writers do, viz., affirming that the Mahāyāna teachings do indeed originate from the Buddha. In addition, Nāgārjuna uses a similar method of addressing this concern, viz., establishing the orthodoxy of the Mahāyāna by showing that its teachings were present in nascent form in the Hīnayāna.

Nāgārjuna and the early Yogācāra writers elaborate their hermeneutical stance in terms of a distinction between two levels of interpretation of the Buddha's word. The first level sticks to the literal meaning or the "letter" (*vyañjana*) of the text, while the second level uncovers the text's deeper meaning (*artha*).[281] This distinction between two levels of interpretation is not only one of kind, but one of value. A literal interpretation of the Āgamas, in this model, does not reveal their true meaning. As Asaṅga states, "the Dharma has two aspects, and the meaning which should be known is not the literal one."[282] In his commentary to the

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ṣaṭpāramitāgarbhās tasmād bauddham idaṃ vacaḥ//

281 E.g., MSA 1:4 and 18:32. The same contrast is made in SP 235:6: *arthato vā vyañjanato vā* (either in regard to the meaning or the letter). Also, in MVy 1546 and BBh, p. 175, recourse to the meaning (*artha-pratisaraṇa*) is contrasted with recourse to the letter (*vyañjana-pratisaraṇa*). In the BBh, the distinction between these two levels of interpretation appears in the context of the four resources (*pratisaraṇa*): One should take resource the meaning (*artha*) and not the letter (*vyañjana*), the dharma and not the *pudgala*, knowledge (*prajñā*) and not sensation (*vijñāna*), the deduced meaning (*nītārtha*) and not the meaning to be deduced (*neyārtha*) (BBh, pp. 256-257).

The distinction between two levels of interpretation of the Buddha's word appears in non-Mahāyāna texts as well.

282 MSA 1:4.

āghrāyamāṇakaṭukaṃ svādurasaṃ yathauṣadhaṃ tad vat/
dharmadvayavyavasthā vyañjanato 'rtho na ca jñeyaḥ//

For a further discussion of this verse, and the context in which it is

MSA, Vasubandhu equates *vyañjana* with *yathārutārtha* (the superficial meaning).[283] He contrasts both of these with the intended meaning (*abhiprāyikārtha*) of the text.

As Vasubandhu's passage continues, we see that the fundamental assumption underlying the distinction between two levels of interpretation is that ultimately, the Dharma is inexpressible. Because the Dharma cannot be verbalized, the literal meaning of the text can only be a pointer toward its intended meaning. As Asaṅga puts it, the basis for the teaching of the Dharma (*pratisaraṇa-deśanādharma*) is not literal, for the dharma can not even be expressed in words.[284] Not only is the literal interpretation incorrect, it is spiritually detrimental. Asaṅga warns, "When one construes the meaning [of the Buddha's teaching] literally, self-conceited understanding leads to the ruin of intelligence. One rejects the well taught, suffers a loss, and is misled by resentment with regard to the Teachings."[285]

Along with the constraint imposed by the inexpressible nature of

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presented, see above, pp. 140-141.

283 MSAbh 18:32. The primary meaning of *ruta* is sound. *Ruta* also refers more specifically to the sound of the cry of an animal. Lévi sees *ruta* as used by the Mahāyāna as a derogatory term (Lévi, p. 6, n 3). See similar use of *ruta* in Laṅkāvatāra 14:3, 154:17.

Earlier in the MSA, Vasubandhu defends the authenticity of the Mahāyāna by saying that its true import is more than just its literal meaning (*ruta*), and that the detractors of the Mahāyāna are only penetrating its literal meaning (MSA 1:7).

284 For a discussion of the four resources (*pratisaraṇa*), see above, n. 281.

For a more extensive discussion of early Madhyamaka and Yogācāra accounts of the ineffability of the absolute, see below, Chaps. 5-6.

285 MSA 1:20.

yathārute 'rthe parikalpyamāne svapratyayo hānimupaiti buddheḥ/ svākhyātatāṃ ca kṣipati kṣatiṃ ca prāpnoti dharme pratighāvatīva//

reality, Nāgārjuna and the early Yogācāra writers also contend that the Buddha's teachings were limited by the intellectual capacities of his audience. In the following analogy, Nāgārjuna explains how the Buddha adapted his teachings according to the abilities of those to whom he was preaching:

> Just as a grammarian [first] makes
> His students read the alphabet,
> So Buddha taught his trainees
> the doctrines which they could bear.
>
> To some he taught doctrines
> To discourage sinning,
> To some, doctrines for achieving merit,
> To others, doctrines based on duality.
>
> To some he taught doctrines based on non-duality,
> to some
> He taught what is profound and frightening to the
> fearful,
> Having an essence of emptiness and compassion,
> The means of achieving [the highest]
> enlightenment.[286]

The hierarchy between audiences of lesser and greater abilities, as well as that between the literal and deeper meaning of the Buddha's teachings, corresponds, in the view of Nāgārjuna and the early Yogācāra writers, to that

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286 Ratnāvalī vs. 394-396.

yathaiva vaiyākaraṇo mātṛkām api pāṭhayet/ buddho'vadattathā dharmaṃ vineyānāṃ yathākṣamam//(394)

keṣāṃcid avadaddharmaṃ pāpebhyo vinivṛttaye/ kēṣāṃcit puṇyasiddyarthaṃ keṣāṃcid dvayaniśritam//(395)

dvayāniśritam ekeṣāṃ bambhīraṃ bhīrūbhīṣaṇam/ śūnyatākaruṇāgarbham ekeṣāṃ bodhisādhanam//(396)

These verses are quoted by Candrakīrti in his Prasannapadā (PP)18:6.

between the Hīnayāna and the Mahāyāna. As Asaṅga states succinctly, the Mahāyāna does not limit its teachings to the literal meaning.[287]

So far I have addressed the bifurcation of the Buddhist Tradition into the Hīnayāna and the Mahāyāna. In addition to this dyadic model, the early Yogācāra writers frequently present a threefold division of the Buddhist Tradition into the Śrāvakayāna, the Pratyekabuddhayāna and the Bodhisattvayāna.[288] Vasubandhu defines the three vehicles as follows:

> The meaning of the three vehicles is thus: When, having heard from others, one obtains liberation through the knowledge of the merits of nirvāṇa and the faults of saṃsāra, this is the vehicle of the Śrāvakas. When, not having heard from others, one works towards liberation by himself, then this is the vehicle of the Pratyekabuddhas. If knowledge free from discriminations arises by itself, and through this knowledge there is liberation, this should be known as the Mahāyāna.[289]

With the model of the three vehicles, the early Yogācāra writers depict a

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287 MSA 1:15.

288 The division of the Buddhist Tradition into three vehicles dates back to at least the first half of the first century CE. An inscription referring to this model has been dated to 55 CE. Sten Konow. "A New Charsadda Inscription" in Bimala Churn Law, ed. D.R. Bhandarkar Volume. Calcutta: Indian Research Institute, 1940, p. 305 ff.

289 MV 3:22a.

yāntrayaṃ yathāyogaṃ/ tatra nirvāṇasaṃsārayor guṇadoṣajñānena parataḥ(/) śrutvā niryāṇārthena śrāvakayānaṃ/ tenaiva svayam aśrutvā parato niryāṇārthena pratyekabuddhayānaṃ/ avikalpena jñānena svayaṃ niryāṇārthena mahāyānaṃ veditavyaṃ//

clear hierarchical progression. In describing an individual on the path to supreme illumination, for instance, Vasubandhu states that "having been a Śrāvaka, he becomes a Pratyekabuddha, and finally he becomes a Buddha."[290] Here, Asaṅga implicitly equates the third vehicle, that of the Bodhisattva, with the one true vehicle, that leading to Buddhahood. This vehicle, in turn, is equated with the Mahāyāna. Later in the same text, Asaṅga presents this hierarchy explicitly and in more detail. He ranks the three vehicles according to five criteria: their tendency (*āśaya*), their teaching (*deśana*), their usage (*prayoga*), their preparation (*saṃbhṛti*) and their attainment (*samudāgama*).[291] With regard to these five criteria, Asaṅga states, the Śrāvakayāna is the lowest, the Pratyekabuddhayāna the middle and the Mahāyāna the highest.

Although they relegate the Śrāvakayāna and Pratyekabuddhayāna to inferior positions within the Buddhist fold, the early Yogācāra writers never deny the legitimacy of these vehicles. Vasubandhu tells us that although the Buddha taught that there is only one vehicle to Buddhahood (the Bodhisattvayāna), this does not mean that the other two vehicles are not authentic.[292] This stance presents an apparent contradiction. If the Bodhisattvayāna is the only path toward highest salvation, and if the goal of

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290 MSAbh 11:59.

śrāvako bhūtvā pratyekabuddho bhavati punaś ca buddha iti.

Vasubandhu says these words were spoken by the Buddha in the Śrīmālā-sūtra, but there does not seem to be a corresponding passage. See Wayman (1974) p. 26.

291 MSA 29:46.

292 MSAbh 11:53.

buddhatvam ekayānam evaṃ tatra tatra sūtre tena tenābhiprāyeṇaikayānatā veditavyā na tu yānatrayaṃ nāsti/

the Bodhisattva is to bring all beings to this highest salvation, how can the other two paths be valid at all?[293] The early Yogācāra writers resolve this apparent contradiction by appealing to a hermeneutical model which reduces the apparent multiplicity of Buddhist paths into a fundamental, unitary vehicle (*ekayāna*).[294] According to the principle of *ekayāna*, the Śrāvakayāna, the Pratyekabuddhayāna, and the Bodhisattvayāna all converge to a single vehicle which leads to Buddhahood. Asaṅga explains this convergence by asserting that all three vehicles are the same in terms of the reality (*dharmadhātu*) to which they refer,[295] their teaching of

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293 Ruegg points out that the theory of *ekayāna* reconciles the idea of three *yānas* with *tathāgatagarbha*, in which the germ of Buddhahood is present in all. Whereas the *triyāna* theory asserts that only the Bodhisattvayāna leads to Buddhahood, *ekayāna* theory asserts that all *yānas* in the end converge into a single path toward Buddhahood (Ruegg, David Seyfort. "On the Knowability and Expressibibity of Absolute Reality in Buddhism." JIBS 20:1 (1971) pp. 6-7).

294 The teaching of *ekayāna* is not new to Asaṅga and Vasubandhu. The APP, for example, asserts that all states of attainment, from that of a stream-winner (*śrotāpatti*) to that of a Buddha, partake of the same fundamental essence (*tathatā*) (450a4-8). In terms of this essence, neither the three vehicles nor the one vehicle can be apprehended (454a18-29).

The Laṅkāvatāra states that ordinarily a distinction is made between the three vehicles and one vehicle and no vehicle, but these distinctions are only for the ignorant (LA p. 65). (Citations for the LA are according to the pages of the Sanskrit edition, provided by D.T. Suzuki in The Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra: A Mahāyāna Text Translated for the First Time from the Original Sanskrit. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, Ltd., 1932.)

For further references to the concept of *ekayāna* in Buddhist literature, see Lamotte (1973) pp. 62*-63*.

295 *dharmadhātu*. Edgerton's translation of this term is "sphere of religion" (Edgerton 1953). Asaṅga seems to be referring to the realm to which the Buddhist teachings apply. In his commentary to this verse, Vasubandhu explains that vehicle means destination (*yatavyam*), and the destination to which the Śrāvakas etc. aim is the same ultimate realm.

selflessness, and the liberation to which they lead.[296]

Asaṅga's statement echoes a verse in a hymn by Nāgārjuna entitled Niraupamyastava.[297] Here, Nāgārjuna asserts that the non-differentiation of the *dharmadhātu* attests to the non-differentiation of the vehicles, and thus establishes the one vehicle. The Buddha taught the three separate vehicles, he explains, only as a means to introduce beings to his teachings: in reality there is only one vehicle.[298] In his Ratnāvalī, Nāgārjuna appeals to the teaching of one vehicle as part of his defense of the Mahāyāna. He asserts,

> What the Tathāgata taught with special
> intention (*abhisaṃdhi*) is not easy to understand.
> Because he taught one as well as three vehicles,
> you should therefore protect yourself through
> indifference.[299]

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296 MSA 11:53.

dharmanair ātmyamuktīnāṃ tulyatvāt gotrabhedataḥ/ dvyāśayāptes ca nirmāṇāt paryantād ekayānatā// cf. MS 10:32.

In MSA 11:43, speaking about attaining the undefiled state (*anasravadhatu*), Asaṅga states that the immaculate lineage (*gotra*) of Buddhas is the same as that of Śrāvakas and Pratyekabuddhas, and that the liberation of these three groups is the same. In the following verse, he asserts that the realm without defilement has a universal basis --it is found in Śrāvakas and Pratyekabuddhas.

297 The Niraupamyastava is one of the four hymns which make up the Catuhstava. Regarding the authenticity of the Catuhstava, as well an account of the texts which make it up, see Lindtner (1982) pp. 121-122.

298 Niraupamyastava 21. (In Giuseppe Tucci's "Two Hymns of the Catuḥstava of Nāgārjuna" JRAS (1932) 309-325.)

299 Ratnāvalī v. 388.

tathāgatābhisaṃdhyoktānyasukhaṃ jñātum ityataḥ/ ekayānatriyānoktād ātmā rakṣya upekṣayā//

Indifference toward the Mahāyāna, Nāgārjuna argues, is not a fault, whereas despising the Mahāyāna is. He concludes, therefore, that "those who seek good for themselves should not despise the Mahāyāna."[300]

Up to this point in our analysis, the doxographical models presented by the early Yogācāra writers not only allow for the possible inclusion of Nāgārjuna within their own rank, but closely resemble Nāgārjuna's own interpretation of divisions within the Buddhist fold. There is, however, a model for internal diversity associated with the Yogācāra school which may be seen as identifying the Yogācāra as separate from, and superior to the Madhyamaka. This is the model of three turnings of the wheel of Dharma (doctrine). Turning the wheel of dharma (*dharmacakrapravartana*) is a metaphor, found throughout Buddhist writings, for the Buddha's act of teaching. In a famous passage of the SN, it is proclaimed that the Buddha turned the wheel of dharma three times. The passage, in full, runs as follows:

> Initially, in Vārānasī, in the Deer Park called Sages' Teaching, the Bhagavan turned the wheel of Dharma, and taught the Four Noble Truths for those who were engaged in the [Śrāvaka] vehicle. This wheel of Dharma was wondrous. Neither gods nor humans had promulgated such doctrines before in this world. However, this wheel of Dharma that the Bhagavan turned was surpassable, susceptible [to critique], was of interpretable meaning, and served as a basis for controversy.
>
> Then the Bhagavan turned a second wheel of Dharma for those who were engaged in the Great Vehicle, and taught, under the aspect of the

300 Ratnāvalī v. 389.

upekṣayā hi nāpuṇyaṃ dveṣāt pāpaṃ kutaḥ śubham/ mahāyāne yato dveṣo nātmakāmaiḥ kṛto'rhati//

teaching of emptiness, that all phenomena were unborn, undestroyed, quiescent from the start, and naturally in a state of nirvāṇa. This wheel of Dharma was wondrous. However, this wheel of doctrine that the Bhagavan turned was surpassable, susceptible [to critique], was of interpretable meaning, and served as a basis for controversy.

Then the Bhagavan turned a third wheel of Dharma, possessing good differentiations, and exceedingly wondrous, for those engaged in all vehicles, beginning with the lack of intrinsic nature of phenomena, and beginning with their being unborn, undestroyed, quiescent from the start, and naturally in a state of nirvāṇa. Moreover, that wheel of doctrine turned by the Bhagavan is unsurpassable, was not susceptible [to critique] was of definitive meaning, and did not serve as a basis for controversy.[301]

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301 SN pp. 139-141.

de nas bcom ldan 'das la byang chub sems dpa' don dam yang dag 'phags kkyis yang 'di skad ces gsol to/ bcom ldan 'das kyis dang por yul bha ra ngha shi drang srong smra ba ri dags kyi nags su theg pa la yang dag par zhugs pa rnams la 'phags pa'i bden pa bzhi'i rnam par bstan pas chos kyi 'khor lo ngo mtshar rmad du byung ba/ sdon ltar gyur pa'm/ mir gyur pa sum kyang chos dang 'thun par 'jig rten du ma bskor ba gcig tu rab tu bskor te/ bcom ldan 'das kyi chos kyi 'khor lo bskor ba de yang bla na mchis pa/ skabs mchis pa/ drang b'ai don rtsod pa'i gzhi'i gans su gyur pa lags la/ bchom ldan 'das kyis chos rnams kyi ngo bo nyid ma mchis pa nyid las ba rtsams/ skye ba ma mchis pa dang/ 'gag pa ma mchis pa dang/ gzod ma nas zhi ba dang/ rang bzhin gyis yongs su mya ngan las 'das pa nyid las ba rtsams nas theg pa chen po la yang dag par zhugs pa rnams la stong pa nyid smos pa'i rnam pas ches ngo mtshar rmad du byung pa'i chos kyi 'khor lo gnyis pa bskor te/ bcom ldan 'das kyi chos kyi 'khor lo bskor ba de yang bla na mchis pa/ skabs ma chis pa/ drang ba'i don rtsod pa'i gzhi'i gnas su gyur pa lags la/ bcom ldan 'das kyis chos rnams kyi ngo bo nyid ma mchis pa nyid las brtsams/ skye ba ma mchis pa dang/ 'gag pa ma mchis pa dang/ gzod ma nas zhi ba dang/ rang bzhin gyis yongs su mya ngan las 'das pa nyid las ba rtsams nas/ theg pa thams cad la yang dag par zhugs pa rnam la legs par rnam par phye ba dang ldan pa/ shin tu ngo mtshar rmad du byung ba'i chos kyi 'khor lo gsum pa bskor te/ bcom ldan 'das kyi chos kyi 'khor lo bskor ba 'di ni bla na ma mchis pa/ skabs ma mchis pa/ des pa'i don lags te/ rtsod pa'i gzhi'i gnas su gyur pa ma lags so/

Before attempting to interpret the SN's teaching of three turnings, and its implications regarding early Yogācāra doxographical self-understanding, it is important to recognize that this passage may not have been part of the original text of the SN, and that the early Yogācāra writers were perhaps never even aware of it. The presentation of the three turnings appears in the seventh chapter of the SN, entitled "The Questions of Paramārthasamudgata." Jitsudō Nagasawa argues that this chapter was a later addition which was incorporated into the SN some time after the composition of the TSN by Vasubandhu, and before the time of Guṇabhadra in China (435 CE).[302] Nagasawa's suggestion is compelling, especially given that the three turnings are not mentioned in any of the other early Yogācāra texts we have examined. Even the commentary to the SN which is attributed to Asaṅga does not mention the three turnings.[303]

It is only in texts considerably later than Asaṅga and Vasubandhu that we can find explicit references to the three turnings as taught in the SN, and the association of these turnings with particular thinkers and bodies of texts. In his commentary to the SN, Wonch'uk (613-690 CE), a Korean pupil of Hsüan-tsang, writes that Bhāvaviveka and other Mādhyamikas held that the first turning entailed the four noble truths as they were taught to the

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302 Jitsudō Nagasawa in IBK 11:2 (1963) pp. 40-45. (as summarized and cited by Hajime Nakamura (1980) p. 255, n 15.

303 Āryasaṃdhinirmocanabhāṣya Peking #5481, vol. 104, pp. 1-7; Tohoku no. 3981. See Powers' translation (1982) pp. 40-42.

There is some doubt as to whether Asaṅga truly wrote the Āryasaṃdhinirmocanabhāṣya. For a discussion of this question, and an argument that Asaṅga was indeed the author of this text, see Powers (1992) pp. 13-22.

Śrāvakas. In this turning, the Buddha is said to have taught the non-substantiality of persons (*pudgala-nairātmya*) but not the non-substantiality of dharmas (*dharma-nairātmya*). The second turning is said to consist in the teachings of the SN. This teaching concerns the perception of marks, and because it also speaks of the perception of objects, is still not the deepest teaching. The third turning is said to consist in the teaching of the Prajñāpāramitā-sūtras. Because it concerns that which is markless, and teaches the emptiness of all dharmas, is the deepest teaching. Wonch'uk writes that contrary to this analysis, Dharmapāla inverted the sequence of the last two turnings, identifying the second turning with the Prajñāparamitā-sūtras, and the final turning with the SN.[304]

Wonch'uk himself takes the second turning of the wheel of dharma to consist in Nāgārjuna's writings, and the third to consist in the writings of Asaṅga and Vasubandhu. Although Wonch'uk makes this distinction, he does not take this model to imply that the two bodies of literature were in opposition, or in any way incompatible. He states that at the time of Asaṅga and Vasubandhu,

> ...there was no controversy over *śūnyatā* and *bhāva*. This is the reason why Bandhuprabhā or Prabhāmitra said: 'A thousand years ago, the taste of the Buddha's teaching was one. Thereafter, the *smṛti* and *prajñā* have gradually deteriorated, which cause the rise of controversy over existence and

304 Wonch'uk's analysis is found in the Tibetan translation of his Commentary on the Saṃdhinirmocana-sūtra, Tibetan Tripiṭaka vol. 106:14 d: 3-8. In this texts, he recreates the dispute between Bhāvaviveka and Dharmapāla.

A translation of the relevant passage from Wonch'uk's commentary can be found in: Hirabayashi, Jay and Iida, Shotaro. "Another Look at the Mādhyamika vs. Yogācāra Controversy Concerning Existence and Non-existence," in Lancaster, pp. 341-360.

non-existence as expressed in those *śāstras*.[305]

As we can see, Wonch'uk depicts the conflict between Madhyamaka and Yogācāra thinkers as development which occurred after the time of Asaṅga and Vasubandhu.[306]

The renowned Tibetan Buddhist historian and scholar, Tsong-kha-pa (1357-1419 CE), agrees (at least in terms of the ordering of the turnings, not necessarily in the ranking of their respective teachings). In Tsong-kha-pa's analysis, the three turnings are distinguished from each other in terms of their teaching of selflessness. The first turning declared the selflessness of the person, along with the existence of other things, such as the aggregates. The second turning refuted the existence of all things without any discrimination. The third turning taught three levels of reality, the first of which is not established in terms of intrinsic identity (*svalakṣaṇa*), and the second two which are.[307]

In both modern and traditional interpretations of the SN, the three

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305 Hirabayashi and Iida (1977) pp. 355-356.

306 See Chap. 7, Sect. III for a further discussion of Buddhist scholars who saw the conflict between Madhyamaka and Yogācāra thinkers as a development in Buddhist thought which postdated Asaṅga and Vasubandhu.

307 Tsong-kha-pa discusses the passage regarding three turnings in the SN in his Legs-bshad snying-po (To no 5396 *Drang ba dang ṇes-pa'i don rnam-par 'byed-pa'i bstan-bcos, Legs bshad snying-po 114 pp. Pha 103b-111b*) For a translation of the relevant passage, see Robert Thurman's Tsong Khapa's Speech of Gold in the *Essence of True Eloquence*: Reason and Enlightenment in the Central Philosophy of Tibet. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984, p. 251.

Bu-ston gives a similar assessment of the passage of the SN, and uses it to explain the varieties of the Buddha's teachings over time (Obermiller (1931-1932) Part 1 p. 30).

turnings frequently have been taken to refer to schools of thought, thus presenting a hierarchical scheme in which either the Madhyamaka or Yogācāra school is placed above the other.[308] If we examine the context of the discussion in which the three turnings are presented, however, it becomes clear that what is being put forth is first and foremost a model for textual interpretation.[309] By its very title, the Samdhinirmocana-sūtra (Sacred Text which Reveals What is Hidden) indicates that the text contains the underlying intention of the Buddha's previous teachings.

In the chapter containing the presentation of the three turnings, the Buddha warns against perceiving his "doctrine to be doctrine, but perceiving what is not the meaning to be the meaning" --in other words, learning the Buddha's teachings, but not fully comprehending them.[310] This chapter begins with Paramārthasamudgata asking the Buddha about his teaching of the intrinsic nature of the aggregates, the four noble truths, and so forth, on the one hand, and his teaching of the essencelessness of all phenomena, on the other. The structure of Paramārthasamudgata's question implies that the two teachings appear to be contradictory. Paramārthasamudgata then asks, "Of what was the Bhagavan thinking when he said, 'All phenomena lack

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308 For examples of this type of interpretation in modern scholarship, see for e.g., Stcherbatsky (1936) p. 11, and Chatterjee (1962) p. 2.

309 Ian Harris, who argues extensively for the continuity of Madhyamaka and Yogācāra thought, suggests that the SN teaches the three turnings as a model of spiritual development. The three turnings, he says, correspond to stages of attainment in spiritual practice. He points to four stages which are outlined in the YBh, each of which is defined in terms of a progressively higher comprehension of the nature of reality. The first two of these stages he identifies with the first turning, and the third and fourth stages with the second and third turnings, respectively.

310 SN p. 121.

intrinsic nature; all phenomena are unproduced, unceasing, quiescent from the start, and naturally in a state of nirvāṇa?'"[311] The Buddha answers that it was in thinking of the three types of lack-of-intrinsic-nature that he presented these teachings.[312]

After explaining what the three types of lack-of-intrinsic-nature are and how they are to be understood, the Buddha goes on to recount how people have misinterpreted his teachings, becoming bound to conventional designations rather than the true purport of his words. He states:

> They accept the teaching that, 'All phenomena just are without intrinsic nature, are just unborn, undestroyed, quiescent from the start, and naturally in a state of nirvāṇa,' but they adhere just to the literal meaning. Thus, they adopt the view that all phenomena do not exist and that character does not exist.[313]

This passage expresses two interrelated concerns. First, there is the concern with interpreting the Buddha's teachings too literally, and thus missing their true meaning. Second, there is the concern that in interpreting the Buddha's

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311 SN pp. 96-97.

bcom ldan das kyis ji ltar dgongs nas chos thams cad ngo bo nyid ma mchis pa/ chos thams cad ma skye pa/ ma 'gags pa ma gzod ma nas zhi ba/ rang bzhin gyis yongs su mya ngan las 'das pa zhes bka' stal snyam bgyid lags te/

312 SN pp. 98-99.

313 SN p. 119.

chos de la mos kyang chos 'di dag thams cad ni ngo bo nyid med pa kho na yin no// chos 'di dag thams cad ni ma skyes pa kho na'o// ma 'gags pa kho na'o gzod ma nas zhi ba kho na'o/ rang bshin gyis yongs su mya ngan las 'das pa kho na'o zhes chos kyi don la sgra ji bzhin kho nar mngon par zhen par byed de/ de dag gzhi des na chos thams cad la med par lta ba dang/ mtshan nyid med par lta ba 'thob par 'gyur te/ med par lta ba dang/ mtshan nyid med par lta ba thob nas kyang thams cad la mtshan nyid thams cad kyis skur pa 'debs te/

teaching too literally, one may arrive at an overly negativistic view of phenomena.

In addition to acting as a hermeneutical model, the model of three turnings has direct philosophical and doxographical implications. Looking back at the passage in which the three turnings are presented, we see that the third turning is set apart from the previous two in that it is described as "possessing good differentiations." Implicit in this statement is the idea that the previous turnings did not differentiate sufficiently. This raises the following two questions: first, what was in need of further differentiation; and second, why was it in need of further differentiation? The answer to the first question seems clear. As we just saw, the chapter containing the three turnings opens with Paramārthasamudgata's inquiry regarding the Buddha's teaching that all phenomena lack intrinsic nature. When asked by Paramārthasamudgata to explicate this teaching, the Buddha responds by presenting the three types of lack-of-intrinsic-nature. He states:

> When I taught that all phenomena were devoid of intrinsic nature, I was thinking of the three types of lack-of-intrinsic-nature of phenomena –the lack-of-intrinsic-nature in terms of character, the lack-of-intrinsic-nature in terms of production, and an ultimate lack-of-intrinsic-nature.[314]

This refrain is repeated several times throughout the chapter. It is apparent

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314 SN p. 99.

don dam yang dag 'phags ngas chos rnams kyi ngo bo nyid med pa nyid rnam pa gsum po 'di lta ste/ mtshan nyid ngo bo nyid med pa nyid dang/ skye ba ngo bo nyid med pa nyid dang/ don dam pa ngo bo nyid med pa nyid las dgongs nas chos thams cad ngo by nyid med pa'o zhes bstan to/

from this context that that which is in need of further differentiation is the teaching of universal lack-of-intrinsic-nature --i.e., the teaching of emptiness which is presented in the Prajñāpāramitā-sūtras, and which has been identified with the second turning of the wheel. The third turning provides this differentiation in its analysis of the lack-of-intrinsic-nature into three types.

The SN recounts that first, the Buddha taught the lack-of-intrinsic-nature in terms of production, and that dependently co-originated phenomena are impermanent. The SN equates this teaching with the notion of *paratantra-niḥsvabhāva* (the lack-of-intrinsic-nature in terms of being produced). The SN further analyses the *paratantra-niḥsvabhāva* by differentiating its two aspects: the *parikalpita-niḥsvabhāva* (the lack-of-intrinsic-nature in terms of being imagined), and the *pariniṣpanna-niḥsvabhāva* (the ultimate lack-of-intrinsic-nature).[315] In showing these two aspects of the dependent nature, the SN and the Yogācāra writings which follow it provide a further analysis of the relation between dependent origination and emptiness. First, they explain the emptiness of all dependently originated phenomena as their lack of the imagined nature. In this sense, the doctrine of dependent co-origination is shown to entail the rejection of all imputed characteristics as merely conventional. Second they explain that the notion of dependent co-origination is not in itself an ultimate intrinsic nature, for the *paratantra-niḥsvabhāva* is nothing more than the absence of intrinsic nature --i.e., the emptiness of all phenomena in terms of their imagined nature.[316]

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315 SN pp. 107-109.

316 See, for e.g.., SN p. 111.
The model of three natures (*trisvabhāva*) will be discussed in detail below,

To address the doxographical implications of this analysis, we turn to our second question, namely, why was the teaching of *niḥsvabhāva* contained in the second turning of the wheel in need of further differentiation? Put in another way: who was not differentiating enough, and in so doing was giving a nihilistic interpretation of the Buddha's teaching of emptiness? As I have argued, the underlying concern of the chapter in which the three turnings are presented is that in interpreting the Buddha's teaching of *niḥsvabhāva* too literally, one may arrive at an overly negativistic view of phenomena. The text seems to be presenting several groups of people who are guilty of this fault.[317]

One group consists of those who ascribe to the teaching that "All phenomena just are without intrinsic nature, are just unborn, undestroyed, quiescent from the start, and naturally in a state of nirvāṇa," yet who adhere to its literal meaning. These are people who accept the Prajñāpāramitā-sūtras as the authentic teaching of the Buddha, but who, according to the SN, do not fully understand it.[318] As the SN puts it, they "believe in the doctrine, but strongly adhere to just its literal meaning."[319] Based on their literal interpretation, "they adopt the view that all phenomena

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Chap. 5, Sect. 4. The relation between the model of *trisvabhāva* and the model of *triniḥsvabhāva* is discussed in Chap. 6, Sect. 5.

317 In addition to the two groups which I discuss, the SN mentions another group consisting of those who do not fully understand the Buddha's teaching that all things lack intrinsic nature, but who, because of their other virtues, accept it on faith (SN p. 117).

318 The SN does not refer explicitly to the Prajñāpāramitā-sūtras, but it is clear from the context that this is the literature being referred to.

319 SN p. 119. Quoted above, n. 313.

do not exist and that character does not exist."[320] In other words, they fall into the extreme of nihilism.

A second group consists of those who also read the Prajñāpāramitā-sūtras too literally. They differ from the first group, however, in that, as a result of their faulty interpretation, they reject the Prajñāpāramitā-sūtras, and the Mahāyāna *sūtras* more generally. According to the SN, upon hearing the teaching that all phenomena lack intrinsic nature, these people become fearful and develop misgivings. The SN states that,

> ...thinking in this way, they deprecate these *sūtras*. They reject them, condemn them, speak badly of them, and also engage in interpolation. In many ways they are involved with these *sūtras* in order to reject, undermine, and eradicate them. They also perceive people who believe in these [*sūtras*] to be enemies.[321]

This group seems to be either members of Śrāvakayāna, or non-Buddhists, who reject the Mahāyāna.

It is the first group --those who accept the Prajñāpāramitā-sūtras but who give a nihilistic interpretation of them-- that some later scholars have taken to include Nāgārjuna and the Madhyamaka school. Against this view, I would argue that the model of three turnings is addressing tendencies of

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320 Ibid.

321 SN p. 125.

'di ni bdud kyis smras pa yin no zhes kyang zer zhing de ltar rig nas mdo sde dag la skur pa 'debs par byed/ spong bar byed/ mi bsngags pa brjod par byed/ ngan du brjod par byed cing lhad kyang 'jug par byed de/ rnam grangs du mar mdo sde de dag spang ba dang/ chud gzan pa dang/ rnam par gzhig pa'i phyir zhugs shing de la mos pa'i gang zag rnams la 'ang dgrar 'du shes par 'gyur ro//

interpretation which had not yet been developed into schools. The model of the three turnings of the wheel of dharma does not clearly indicate that the early Yogācāra writers saw the doctrines they were presenting as superior to, or even distinct from those presented by Nāgārjuna. The primary concern behind this model is to establish the authenticity of the early Mahāyāna *sūtras* and the teachings they contain. As we have seen above, this concern is characteristic of the early Yogācāra writings in general. The SN lays out the teaching of three types of lack-of-intrinsic-nature to clarify what the earlier Mahāyāna literature taught about emptiness. This by no means constitutes a rejection of Nāgārjuna's interpretation of emptiness. Instead, the presentation of the three types of lack-of-intrinsic-nature may indeed be considered a defense of his teaching of emptiness against faulty accusations of its being nihilistic.

VI. The Textual Basis for the Early Yogācāra

A strong indication of early Yogācāra writers' stance within the Buddhist tradition can be found in their treatment of the Buddhist texts which precede them. Here, I briefly consider the list of texts from which the early Yogācāra writers drew, as well as their more general statements regarding the Buddhist canon as a whole. I will take as a representative sample three central early Yogācāra texts: the MSA, the MS and the MV along with their commentaries. The range of texts from which the early Yogācāra writers draw in these works indicates their solid grounding in the traditional Buddhist Āgamas as well as their familiarity with early Mahāyāna *sūtras*.

In referring to the Āgamas, Asaṅga mentions several different

collections of traditional texts: the Āgamas of the Sthaviras,[322] the Mahāsāṃghikas[323] and the Mahīśāsakas.[324] In terms of specific texts, Asaṅga draws four times from the Ekottarāgama,[325] three times from the Samyuktāgama,[326] twice from the Udānavarga,[327] and once from the Madhyamāgama.[328] He also quotes from a verse included in the

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322 MS 1:11.

323 MS 1:11.

324 MS 1:11.

325 MSA 16:17-18 cites the Pañcasthāna-sūtra. This is almost certainly a reference to the Ekottarāgama,Tok. ed. 12:2.22b, Chap. 24, where the same text occurs. (The Pali version of the same text is found in Aṅguttara Nikāya, ed. Richard Morris et al. London: Pali Text Society, 1885-1910. Pañcaka-nipāta no. 38:3.42) (See Lévi (1911) p. 264, n. 7.)

MSA 18:101 refers to the Pañcaka. Although this is probably a reference to the Pañcasthāna-sūtra, the material quoted is not found in this text.

326 MSA 18:103 cites the Parijñā-sūtra and the Bhārahāra-sūtra, both of which are found in the Samyuktāgama, where they appear in the order which Vasubandhu lists them here (Tok. ed., 13: 2.15b). In the Pali Saṃyutta Nikāya, the two *sūtras* are placed in the opposite order. (See Lévi (1911) pp. 264-265, n. 9.)

MSA 14:26 cites the Kṣāranadī, which is found in the Chinese version of the Samyuktāgama (Tok. ed., 13:4.51b).

327 MS 2:13 draws from Udānavarga 33:55; and MS 2:31 draws from Udānavarga 29:3. Both passages in the MS do not indicate that they are quotations.

328 MSA 3:2 refers to the Akṣarāśi-sūtra. This is most likely an alternate title for the Bahudhātuka-sūtra from the Madhyamāgama 181:47.10. Regarding the citation here, Lévi says "Le tibetain dit: *Ba ru ra'i mdo*; le chinois: *To kiai siuto-lo*. La traduction tibétaine précise la valeur du titre sanscrit. Ba-ru-ra est l'équivalent tibétain de *akṣa* ou *vibhītaka*; c'est le nom d'une plante de la famille des myrobalans. Le chinois d'autre part précise le sujet du sūtra 'le sūtra des *dhātu* nombreux.' Le Majjhima Nikaya (115) et le Madhyama Agama (181; chap. 47, n° 10) contiennent un sūtra identique intitulé *Bahu-dhātuka*; ce sūtra

Dhammapada.[329] From the early Mahāyāna literature, the early Yogācāra writers draw most extensively from the Prajñāpāramitā literature.[330] Among the specific Prajñāpāramitā texts from which they draw are the Śatasāhasrikā,[331] the Ratnakūta,[332] and the Aksayamati-sūtra.[333] Other Mahāyāna texts from which the early Yogācāra writers draw are the Daśabhūmika-sūtra,[334] and the Śrīmālā-sūtra.[335]

While the early Yogācāra writers draw from sources recognized as canonical by the Hīnayāna, they make a clear distinction between the body

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donne de nombreuses classifications des *dhātu*, et il pourrait sembler le texte visé ici; mais il n'y est aucunement question d'un 'tas de myrobalans.' Le pali parle d'une maison d'herbes ou de roseaux; le chinois, d'un 'tas de roseaux.' La mention de l'*akṣa* doit se référer aux fruits du myrobalan qui servent de dēs à jouer."

329 MS 2:32 (kārikā 11) and MS 2:12 (kārikā 37). It is not clear whether Asaṅga is quoting from the Dhammapada directly, since he does not mention the text by name.

330 MS 2:22; MSA 5:11 and 11:77. The latter two passages are found in the Śarasāhasrikā-prajñāpāramitā.

331 The Śatasāhasrikāprajñāpāramitā is cited three times in the MSA. In MSA 1:12, it is called "*śatasāhasrikā*," while in MSA 5:11 and 11:77 it is referred to as "*prajñāpāramitā*." It is also quoted in MS 10:30. The Śatasāhasrikā-prajñāpāramitā forms the first section of the Mahāprajñāpāramitā-sūtra.

332 The Ratnakūta, a Prajñāpāramitā-sūtra composed circa 25 CE, is cited in MSA 19:28-29.

333 The Akśayamati-sūtra, cited in MSA 4:20, forms the 45th part of the Ratnakūta.

334 The Daśabhūmika, which is found in the Avatamsaka-sūtra, is quoted in MSA 7:4, 14:6 and 18:54, as well as MS 2:7 and 2:27. A commentary on this text is attributed to Vasubandhu in the Tibetan bsTan 'gyur.

335 MSA 11:59.

of scripture belonging to the Hīnayāna and that belonging to the Mahāyāna. In the MSA, this distinction is first mentioned in the context of a debate as to whether or not the Mahāyāna can be considered the teaching of the Buddha (*buddhavacana*). As we have seen above, two of the traditional criteria for establishing the authority of a particular teaching is that it be found first, in the *sūtras* and second, in the *vinaya*. When Asaṅga's opponents claim that the Mahāyāna fails on these grounds, Asaṅga replies that the Mahāyāna teachings appear in the Mahāyāna's own *sūtras* (*svasmin mahāyānasūtra*) and in the *kleśavinaya*.[336] Later in the MSA, Asaṅga refers again to a separate corpus of Mahāyāna scriptures. He states that the three "baskets" (*piṭakas*) of the Buddha's teachings are divided into two classes: the three *piṭakas* of the Hīnayāna, and the three of the Agrayāna.[337] Further, in the AS, Asaṅga defines a follower of the Mahāyāna (*mahāyānika*) as someone who, among other things, depends upon the Bodhisattvapiṭaka.[338] The distinction between the Śrāvakapiṭaka and the Bodhisattvapiṭaka or Bodhisattvasūtrapiṭaka appears in a number of places, including the MS and

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336 MSA 1:11. Lamotte notes an apparent difference between the *vinaya* of the Hīnayāna and that of the Mahāyāna. While the Hīnayāna *vinaya* contains the collection of prescriptions regulating the monastic life, the *vinaya* of the Mahāyāna includes treatises regarding moral and meditational discipline.

337 MSAbh 11:1.

piṭakatrayaṃ sūtravinayābhidharmāḥ/ tad eva trayaṃ hīnayānāgrayānabhedena dvayaṃ bhavati/ śrāvakapiṭakaṃ bodhisattvapiṭakaṃ ca/

338 AS p. 147. See also AS p. 133 for a discussion of the contents of the three *piṭakas*. (Walpola Rahula, Le Compendium de la Super-Doctrine (Abhidharmasamuccaya) D'Asaṅga. Paris: École Française d'Extrême-Orient, 1971.)

the Bodhisattvabhūmi (BBh).[339]

Although Asaṅga clearly points to the existence of a body of texts associated specifically with the Mahāyāna, it is not certain which texts he is referring to when he speaks of the Mahāyāna *piṭakas*. Despite this ambiguity, there is the important point that Asaṅga treats the corpus of Mahāyāna literature, or the Bodhisattva-piṭaka, as one. No further subdivision between Yogācāra literature and Madhyamaka literature is defined or even hinted at. In terms of his citations from the Mahāyāna corpus, Asaṅga indicates no preference between texts which we now associate specifically with the Yogācāra and those we associate generally with the Mahāyāna. Furthermore, there is a strong similarity between Asaṅga's and Nāgārjuna's choices of texts from which to draw.[340] Judging

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[339] For a discussion of the term Bodhisattvapiṭaka in the BBh, see Wayman (1961) p. 31. See also Ulrich Pagel's The Bodhisattvapitaka: Its Doctrines, Practices and their Position in Mahāyāna Literature. Buddhica Britannica Series Continua. Tring, UK: Institute of Buddhist Studies, 1995.

[340] Nāgārjuna's writings draw from a similar range of texts as the early Yogācāra writings. These sources include both the traditional Āgamas and the early Mahāyāna *sūtras*.

In the MMK, the only text to which Nāgārjuna refers explicitly is the Kātyāyanāvavāda, a text of the Saṃyuktāgama (MMK 15:7). In a number of other cases, he draws from the Āgamas without mentioning their title: e.g. the Anavararāgra Saṃyukta (MMK 11:1); the Acelakāśyapa (MMK 12:1); the Dhātuvibhaṅga-sūtra of the Madhyamāgama (MMK 13:1); and the Brahmajāla-sūtra of the Dīrghāgama (MMK 27). For a list of nikāyas referred to in the Ratnāvalī, see Lindtner (1982) p. 163, n. 159.

According to Lindtner, the main source for Nāgārjuna's MMK, "is that group of Mahāyāna scriptures commonly known as Prajñāpāramitāsūtras. His "*ipsissima verba*" prove that of these [Prajñāpāramitā] texts he knew at least Astasāhasrikā, Saptaśatikā and Vajracchedikā " (Lindtner (1982) p. 261).

Ruegg agrees that the Prajñāpāramitā literature constitutes a central source for Nāgārjuna. He also adds the Ratnakūta and the Avatamsaka literature as primary influences (Ruegg (1981) p. 6-7).

A commentary on the Pañcaviṃśatisāhasrikā which is attributed to Nāgārjuna, the Ta-chin-tu-lun (Mahāprajñāpāramitopadeśa), cites the

from the texts upon which Asaṅga grounds his own work, and Asaṅga's general remarks regarding the Buddhist canon, there is no reason to believe that he saw the Madhyamaka as a separate group within the Mahāyāna, with certain texts associated with it. The continuity between the writings of Asaṅga and those of Nāgārjuna is further suggested by the common textual framework upon which they base their works.

Walpola Rahula points to the existence and the importance of this common ground among Mahāyāna thinkers. Thinkers such as Asaṅga and Vasubandhu were not attempting to found new schools, according to Rahula, but were

> ...expounding the old teaching with their own new interpretations, explanations, arguments and theories, according to their own genius, ability, knowledge and experience.... Their contribution to Buddhism lay not in giving it a new philosophy but providing, in fascinatingly different ways, brilliant new interpretations and explanations of the old philosophy. But they all solidly based themselves on the ancient Canonical texts and their commentarial traditions.[341]

Rahula continues, arguing that the philosophy of Nāgārjuna and that of Asaṅga and Vasubandhu are not contradictory, but complementary to one

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Vimalakīrtinirdeśa, the Śūramgamasamādhi, the Saddharmapuṇḍarīka, the Daśabhūmika, the Akṣayamatinirdeśa, the Tathāgataguhyaka and the Kāśyapaparivarta.

The Sūtrasamuccaya, attributed to Nāgārjuna and included by Lindtner as one of his twelve authentic texts, is a collection of extracts drawn primarily from Mahāyāna sūtras. Furthermore, the Catuhstava and Bodhhisambhāra(ka), also attributed to Nāgārjuna, contain numerous allusions to, or even quotations from, these early Mahāyāna texts. See Lindtner (1982) pp. 175-178 for the list of texts from which Nāgārjuna draws in the Sūtrasamuccaya.

341 Rahula (1972) p. 324.

another. The two systems known as Madhyamaka and Yogācāra, he asserts,

> ...explain and expound, in different ways with different arguments, the very same doctrines of *nairātmya*, *śūnyatā*, *tathatā*, *pratītyasamutpāda*, but are not a philosophy of their own which properly can be called Nāgārjuna's or Asaṅga's or Vasubandhu's philosophy. We can only say that they are Nāgārjuna's or Asaṅga's or Vasubandhu's explanations, arguments and theories, postulated to prove and establish the Canonical teaching of *śūnyatā*, *cittamātra* or *nairātmya*. If any differences of opinion exist between them, these are only with regard to their own arguments and theories, advanced to establish the old fundamental Canonical teaching, but not with regard to the teaching itself.[342]

VII. Conclusion

The early Yogācāra writings were clearly composed within the context of conflict within Buddhist literary circles. The preceding analysis of the defensive and offensive polemic in the early Yogācāra writings indicates which groups were involved in this conflict, as well as the issues around which the conflict revolved. The opposition underlying the early Yogācāra polemic is between the Hīnayāna and the Mahāyāna. The nature of this polemic strongly indicates that the early Yogācāra writers were concerned with establishing the orthodoxy of the Mahāyāna, as well as distinguishing the Mahāyāna from the Hīnayāna. The particular issues on which they seek to establish their group identity are embodied in the figure of the Bodhisattva. These issues include insight into the emptiness of all dharmas, the dissolution of all discriminations including that between

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342 Rahula (1972) pp. 326-327.

saṃsāra and nirvāṇa, the aspiration to full Buddhahood, and the quest to bring all sentient beings to enlightenment. Any further, more subtle spiritual or doctrinal developments do not appear to constitute for the early Yogācāra writers sufficient grounds upon which to distinguish themselves from other Mahāyāna thinkers.

The highly polemical nature of the early Yogācāra writings does not necessarily imply that at the time they were written, the Mahāyāna was a large scale movement independent from the Hīnayāna. Indeed, one may speculate that the propounders of the Mahāyāna, being in a distinct minority, were concerned more with establishing themselves as a cohesive group separate from the Hīnayāna, than they were with assessing each other's teachings. In the biographical accounts of Asaṅga and Vasubandhu, we have seen the precarious position of the Mahāyāna depicted through details such as Asaṅga's fear that Vasubandhu, while he was still a Sarvāstivādin, would succeed in defeating the Mahāyāna. In both the biographical and the philosophical literature, the Hīnayāna and Mahāyāna are used as ideal categories which are defined in opposition to one another.

What the highly polemical nature of the early Yogācāra writings does clearly indicate is that the early Yogācāra writers sought to distinguish themselves from the Hīnayāna, and even further, to assert their relative superiority. The hermeneutical models which the early Yogācāra writers present allow them to maintain the existence of a continuity between the Hīnayāna and the Mahāyāna, while simultaneously asserting the latter's superiority. These models include the distinction between two levels of truth, and the resolution of the three Buddhist vehicles into a unitary, supreme path. In all the concerns which underlie the early Yogācāra polemic --defending the orthodoxy of the Mahāyāna, asserting the

distinctiveness and the superiority of the Mahāyāna, and justifying the existence of a range of views within the Buddhist fold-- the early Yogācāra writings are in close accord with the writings of Nāgārjuna. Even further, they concur in the way they address these concerns.

For both Nāgārjuna and the early Yogācāra writers, issues of doxography are integrally related to issues of philosophy. Not only do these writers differ from the Hīnayāna on particular points of doctrine, but they understand and interpret these differences in philosophical terms, such as the distinction between levels of meaning, the conception of the absolute as ineffable, and the simultaneous recognition of multiple spiritual paths and assertion of a single supreme path. Through these hermeneutical models, Nāgārjuna and the early Yogācāra writers elaborate a general attitude of inclusivism, which appears in the earlier Mahāyāna literature, as well as in the biographical accounts of Asaṅga and Vasubandhu.

The polemical passages in the early Yogācāra writings provide no evidence of tensions between groups within the Mahāyāna. The hermeneutical models, as well do not indicate any concern with distinctions between Mahāyāna thinkers. Even the model of three turnings, which at first may appear to indicate that the early Yogācāra writers saw themselves part of a movement which surpassed Nāgārjuna's Madhyamaka, is ambiguous in terms of its doxographical implications. The overwhelming concern of the early Yogācāra appears to have been with the fundamental division between the Hīnayāna and the Mahāyāna. Furthermore, the early Yogācāra writers not only shared this concern with Nāgārjuna, but were closely continuous with him in their method of addressing this concern, and in their textual grounding of their positions. Taken together, these facts strongly suggest that the early Yogācāra authors were not writing in opposition to a clearly

defined Madhyamaka school, nor were they writing with the intent to establish and systematize the Yogācāra as a separate Buddhist school.

Chapter 5
The Two Truths and Three Natures Defined

I. Introduction

In the preceding two chapters, I have discussed the relation between the early Madhyamaka and Yogācāra schools from a doxographical point of view. I have searched the biographical accounts of Asaṅga and Vasubandhu as well as the early Yogācāra philosophical literature for indications as to where the early Yogācāra writers were placed by others, and by themselves, within the Buddhist fold. In both the biographical and philosophical literature, I have observed an overwhelming concern with the distinction between the Hīnayāna and the Mahāyāna, and with the assertion of the Mahāyāna's authority. There have been no indications, however, that the early Yogācārins were writing in opposition to the works of Nāgārjuna, or that they even conceived of the Madhyamaka as a distinct group within the Mahāyāna.

In this chapter and the one immediately following it, I will address the relation between the early Madhyamaka and Yogācāra schools from a philosophical perspective. I will focus upon two central doctrines which are closely associated with each of the two schools: the two truths and the three natures. In modern Buddhist scholarship, the models of two truths and three natures have often been taken as representative of the Madhyamaka and Yogācāra schools, respectively, and the relation between these two models has been taken as indexical of the relation between the two schools. Alan Sponberg, for example, writes that "...the Classical Yogācāra masters sought

to go beyond what they saw as an inherent limitation in the Mādhyamika position," and characterizes the model of three natures as "...both a response to and a development of the two truths doctrine in the Mādhyamika school."[343]

The present chapter is devoted to carefully defining the two truths and three natures, and to situating them within the writings of Nāgārjuna and the early Yogācārins. In locating these doctrines within the early Madhyamaka and Yogācāra schools, this chapter will consider their relation to other doctrines within these schools, as well as the history of their treatment in the Buddhist literature which precedes them. The following chapter will compare the two models, and assess their compatibility. Together, these two chapters will help to clarify the doxographical self-understanding of the early Yogācāra writers, for as I have discussed in the preceding chapter, issues of doxography and issues of philosophy are integrally related within Mahāyāna thought. These two chapters will also seek to establish whether from the perspective of an outside reader, the philosophies of the early Madhyamaka and Yogācāra can be regarded as compatible.

II. The Two Truths in Nāgārjuna's Thought

In a well-known passage of his Mūlamadhyamakakārikā (MMK), Nāgārjuna proclaims the distinction between two levels of truth. He states,

> The teaching of the Dharma by the Buddhas
> is based upon two truths: the worldly conventional
> truth and the ultimate truth.

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343 Sponberg (1983) p. 97.

Those who do not understand the distinction between these two kinds of truth do not understand the deepest meaning of the Buddha's doctrine.

Without resorting to relative truth, the ultimate [truth] cannot be taught. Without approaching the ultimate [truth], nirvāṇa cannot be attained.[344]

The model of two truths is of central significance in Nāgārjuna's thought. In the above quotation, Nāgārjuna presents the distinction between two levels of truth as an interpretative model which encompasses the entire corpus of Buddhist teachings. Besides being expansive in scope, the model of two truths is of central import in practical terms. According to Nāgārjuna, the recognition of the fundamental distinction between conventional and ultimate truths is essential to understanding Buddhist teachings. And the attainment of this understanding is the only means to nirvāṇa.

The distinction between two levels of truth or reality is not by any means new to Nāgārjuna.[345] Nāgārjuna's presentation of the two truths

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344 MMK 24:8-10.

dve satye samupāśritya buddhānāṃ dharma deśanā/ lokasaṃvṛtisatyaṃ ca satyaṃ ca paramārthataḥ// ye 'nayor na vijānanti vibhāgaṃ satyayordvayoḥ/ te tattvaṃ na vijānanti gambhīraṃ buddhaśāsane// vyavahāram anāśritya paramārtho na deśyate/ paramārtham anāgamya nirvāṇaṃ nādhigamyate//

Throughout the dissertation, I refer to Kenneth Inada's edition of the MMK: Nāgārjuna: A Translation of his Mūlamadhyamakakārikā with an Introductory Essay. Tokyo: Hokuseido Press, 1970.

345 One of the earliest statements of the two truths in the Mahāyāna *sūtras* is found in the Bhavasaṃkrānti (translated by N.A. Sastri (1938)). The two truths are also mentioned the APP, the Saddharmapundarika, the Samādhirāja, and numerous other Mahāyāna texts.

The doctrine of two truths was not exclusive to the Mahāyāna. In the mid third century CE, Harivarman in his Satyasiddhaśāstra attributes to the Bahuśrutīyas (a Hīnayāna school which broke off from the Gokulika school of the Mahāsaṇgikas) the doctrine that there are two truths: one which is *laukika* or *samvṛti*, and one which is absolute (*paramārtha*). See Shoryo Katsura's

differs from earlier ones, however, not only in terms of the emphasis which he gives this doctrine, but also in terms of the interpretation to which he subjects it. In expounding his model of two truths, Nāgārjuna directly opposed the Sarvāstivādin Abhidharmic view of two truths in which ultimate truth was defined as a true statement concerning dharmas, and conventional truth as a true statement concerning all other objects, both abstract and physical.[346] According to this scheme, the distinction between two levels of truth statement corresponds to the existential status of the statements' referent. That is to say, statements are classified as ultimate truth (*paramārtha-satya*) when they apply correctly to objects which are ultimately existent (*paramārtha-sat*). Statements are conventional truth (*saṃvṛti-satya*) if they apply correctly to objects which are conventionally existent (*saṃvṛti-sat*). This view is presented, for example, in Vasubandhu's AK. According to Vasubandhu, dharmas such as form (*rūpa*) and sensation (*vedanā*), are truly existent (*paramārtha-sat*), while pots, water and things of our everyday world are provisionally or conventionally existent (*saṃvṛti-*

"Harivarman on Satyadvaya." JIBS 27:2 (1979) 1-5.

The two truths also appear in Pāli literature. For a discussion of the two truths in the Theravāda tradition in general, and in the work of the twelfth-century Buddhist commentator Gurulugomi in particular, see Charles Hallisey's "In Defense of Rather Fragile and Local Achievement: Reflections on the Work of Gurulugomi" in Religion and Practical Reason: New Essays in the Comparative Philosophy of Religions. Frank Reynolds and David Tracy, eds. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994.

346 AK 6:4. Pralhad Pradhan, ed. Abhidharmakośabhāṣyam of Vasubandhu, Deciphered and Edited. Revised Second Edition with Introduction and Indices. Tibetan Sanskrit Works Series vol. 8. Patna: Kashi Prasad Jayaswal Research Institute, 1975.

Yaśomitra's commentary states: *trividhaṃ hi Yogācārānāṃ sat paramārthasaṃvṛtisat dravyasac ca/ dravyataḥ svalakṣaṇataḥ sad dravyasad iti/* (Unrai Wogihara, ed. Sphuṭārtha Abhidharmakośa-vyākhyā of Yaśomitra. Tokyo, 1932-36.)

sat). Therefore, *paramārtha-satya* applies to dharmas, while *saṃvṛti-satya* applies to all other objects which are only conventionally existent (*saṃvṛti-sat*). This understanding of the two truths seems to have been widely accepted within the Buddhist fold.[347]

According to Nāgārjuna, however, the distinction between things which are absolutely existent and those which are not is a false distinction, for nothing, including dharmas, exists absolutely. That is to say, of any entity whatsoever, one can not validly assert that it exists, does not exist, both or neither.[348] *Paramārtha-satya* statements can not have as their referent things which are *paramārtha-sat*, therefore, for there are no such things. If we are to categorize truth statements according to the existential value of their referents, as the Abhidharmikas do, then all true statements must be conventionally true, since all objects are only conventionally existent.

This means that ultimate truth cannot be conveyed verbally: any

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347 Even in his text written in opposition to the AK, Saṅghabhadra (a Vaibhāṣika) does not disagree with Vasubandhu's presentation of the two truths. (Nyāyānuṣāra, Taisho 1562, vol. 29 p. 666a (xxiii. 5, fol. 80b6 ff) translated by Louis de La Vallée Poussin in "Documents D'Abhidharma: Les Deux, les Quatre, les Trois Vérités." MCB 5 (1936-1937) pp. 169ff.)

On the authorship of the Nyāyānusāra, see Jyan Takakusu, "The works of Saṅghabhadra, an opponent of Vasubandhu" JRAS 1905 158-9.

For additional expressions of the truths which are in close accord to the AK, see, for example, the Kathāvatthu, p. 22: *duve saccāni akkhāsi saṃbuddho vadatāṃ varo/ sammutiṃ paramatthaṃ ca tatiyaṃ anupalabbhati tatha// saṃketavacanaṃ saccaṃ lokasammutikāraṇaṃ/ paramatthavacanaṃ saccaṃ dhammānaṃ tathalakkhaṇaṃ//* (quoted by Louis de la Vallée Poussin in (1971) vol. 4, p. 139, n. 5).

See also: Katthāvatthu pp. 63, 180, 371; Saṃyuktābhidharmasāra Taisho 1552, vol. 28, p. 958b; Abhidharmadīpa ed. P.S. Jaini pp. 262-263; and Mahāvibhāṣa Taisho 1545 vol. 27 pp. 399b-400c.

348 See, for e.g., MMK 15:7 and 15:10.

statement, even if it concerns ultimate reality, falls within the sphere of conventional designation. Nāgārjuna clearly indicates the ineffability of ultimate truth in the following description of the nature of reality (*tattva*):

> Unrelated to anything, tranquil, unable to be verbally designated, undifferentiated, and not diverse in meaning--these are the attributes of reality.[349]

This means, according to Nāgārjuna, that even though the Buddha's teaching is based upon his experience of the ultimate truth, the teaching itself is made up of conventional words and concepts.[350]

For example, although the Buddha experienced the truth of *anātman*, he had to rely on the concept of *ātman* to convey his experience. His use of the term *ātman* should not, however, be misconstrued as a reference to some existent entity. Nor, for that matter, should it be understood that there is any such thing as *anātman* either. These are provisional designations (*prajñapti*) only. As Nāgārjuna asserts,

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349 MMK 18:9.

aparapratyayaṃ śāntaṃ prapañcair aprapañcitaṃ/ nirvikalpam anānārtham etat tattvasya lakṣaṇam//

cf. Mañjuśrī's statement in the Vimalakīrtinirdeśanā-sūtra: "It is in all beings wordless, speechless, shows no signs, is not possible of cognizance, and is above all questioning and answering" (Taisho 14, p. 551c)

350 The notion of the ineffability of the absolute was not new to Nāgārjuna. However, the incorporation of this notion into the model of two truths, and the use of the two truths to grapple with the problems of ineffability do seem to be new to Nāgārjuna. For a comparison of the notion of ineffability in Nāgārjuna's writings and the Suttanipāta, see Luis Gómez's "Proto-Mādhyamika in the Pali Canon." PEW 26:2 (1976) 137-167.

> The Buddhas have provisionally designated the *ātman*, and also taught the idea of *anātman*. At the same time, they have not taught any such thing as *ātman* or *anātman*.[351]

Nāgārjuna applies the same principle of provisional designation to his own writings. Although he repeatedly asserts the emptiness of dharmas, he cautions against reifying the notion of emptiness itself. To grasp onto emptiness as anything more than a conventional designation is just as much an error as to grasp onto the idea of ultimate existence.[352]

III. The Two Truths in Early Yogācāra Thought

The early Yogācāra writings by no means reject the teaching of two truths. Throughout the works of Asaṅga and Vasubandhu, the distinction between the conventional and ultimate truths is simply assumed. No argument is given as to its viability, nor is any serious attempt made to explain it: it is simply part of the intellectual heritage with which they were working. Perhaps because they simply accept the model of two truths as given, the early Yogācāra writers do not address it at any great length. At the same time, they clearly acknowledge this model's validity and importance. Asaṅga states, for example, that it is through the Bodhisattva's great effort to seek the essence (*dharmatā*) of the conventional and ultimate

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351 MMK 18:6.

ātmety api prajñapitam anātmety api deśitaṃ/ buddhair nātmā na cānātmā kaścid ity api deśitaṃ//

352 See, for e.g., MMK 22:11.

truths that he becomes a support (*pratiśaraṇa*)[353] for all creatures.[354]

Since the early Yogācārins adhere to both the doctrine of two truths and that of three natures, it is safe to conclude that they did not view them as contradictory. Before concluding categorically that the early Yogācāra model of three natures is compatible with Nāgārjuna's teaching of two truths, however, we need to address the question of whether the Yogācāra presentation of the two truths concurs with that of Nāgārjuna. In other words, we need to eliminate the possibility that the early Yogācāra writers were able to see the two truths and the three natures as compatible only because they had a different understanding of the two truths than did Nāgārjuna.

Modern scholars have often remarked that Yogācāra thinkers viewed Nāgārjuna's assertion that ultimate truth stands apart, without any connection to conventional truth, as going too far in separating the conventional and ultimate realms. Indeed a number of modern authors have taken this as a principle di[illegible]nction o[illegible] [illegible]ee[illegible] betw[illegible] the M[illegible]ma[illegible] and [illegible]āra s[illegible]ols. Ste[illegible] [illegible]na[illegible] for [illegible]ple, [illegible] ha[illegible] [illegible]ere is a

> ...striking difference between the methodologies of Nāgārjuna and Vasubandhu. Whereas Nāgārjuna emphasizes "the lack of own-being in events" to such a degree that he wishes to dialectically invalidate any statement that could be made, Vasubandhu is interested in the psychological processes which allow us to reach a state where "the lack of own-beings in events" is

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353 See de La Vallée Poussin (1971) vol. 5, pp. 246-248 for a discussion and bibliographic information regarding the term *pratiśaraṇa* (*pratisaraṇa*).

354 MSA 11:78.

realized.[355]

Anacker goes on to assert that Nāgārjuna, by upholding a "radical distinction between conventional and ultimate truths, does not give us any path for bridging the two." The contrast which Anacker draws is problematic, however, in that it does not take into full consideration the fact that the idea of the transcendence of ultimate truth is common to both Nāgārjuna and the early Yogācāra writers.

The early Yogācāra writers by no means deny Nāgārjuna's conception of ultimate truth as ineffable and entirely disconnected from conventional terms. In the MSA, for example, Asaṅga writes:

> Neither being nor non-being, neither thus nor otherwise, it does not arise nor does it cease, it does not diminish nor does it increase, it is neither purified nor not purified. This is the characteristic of *paramārtha*.[356]

In a number of instances, the early Yogācāra writers go so far as to define ultimate truth as the negation or destruction of conventional truth. In this sense they present conventional truth as diametric to, and mutually exclusive of ultimate truth. Asaṅga asserts, for example, that there is a mutual opposition between the knowledge of truth (*satyajñāna*) and knowledge of

355 Anacker (1984) p. 273, n. 1.

356 MSA 6:1.
na sanna cāsanna tathā na cānyathā na jāyate vyeti na cāvahīyate/ na vardhate nāpi viśudhyate punar viśudhyate tat paramārthalakṣaṇam//

worldly things (*laukikajñāna*).[357] Vasubandhu also depicts a relation of exclusion between the two truths when he defines the three natures. In his TSN, he defines the imagined nature as conventional truth (*vyavahāra*) itself, and the ultimate truth as the dependent nature when it is stripped of the imagined nature.[358] Likewise, Asaṅga states:

> Just as it is accepted that in this (dependent nature) there is no ultimate existence of that (imagined nature), it is accepted that there is the appearance of this (imagined nature) in terms of relative truth[359]

For both Nāgārjuna and the early Yogācārins, the transcendence of the ultimate is immediately tied to the problem of verbalization. Since the ultimate truth is utterly transcendent, all doctrines, all statements and all conceptualizations fall under the category of conventional truth. According to Nāgārjuna, the Buddha himself taught the ineffability of phenomena. In

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[357] MS 5:2.

[358] TSN 23.

"It is accepted that the imagined [nature] is conventional reality itself, that the following one [*viz.* the dependent nature] is the creator of conventional reality, and the other [*viz.* the perfected nature] is the destruction of conventional reality."

kalpito vyavahārātmā vyavahartrātmako 'paraḥ/ vyavahārasamucchedaḥ svabhāvaś cānya iṣyate/

Sanskrit citations of the TSN are taken from Fernando Tola and Carmen Dragonetti's edition, "The Trisvabhāvakārikā of Vasubandhu." JIP 11 (1983) 225-266.

[359] MSA 11:16.

yathā tasmin na tad bhāvaḥ paramārthas tatheṣyate/ yathā tasyopalabdhis tu tathā saṃvṛtisatyatā//

his praise to the Buddha, Nāgārjuna asserts:

> You have declared that dharmas are beyond the four categories (*koṭi*). They are not conceivable through consciousness, much less are they within the sphere of words (*vāc*).[360]

In the Tattvārtha Chapter of his BBh, Asaṅga also asserts the inexpressible nature of dharmas. He writes that the Bodhisattvas who realize the highest level of reality penetrate the non-self of dharmas (*dharma-nairātmya*), and in so doing, realize "the inexpressible nature (*nirabhilāpya-svabhāvatā*) of all dharmas." Asaṅga goes on to assert that the essential nature of verbal designation (*prajñanptivāda*) is identical to the essential nature of the non-discursive knowable (*nirvikalpa-jñeya*).[361]

Both Nāgārjuna and the early Yogācāra writers argue at great length that the fact that we can name dharmas and make certain assertions about them does not mean that dharmas exist as ontological referents of these

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360 Acintyastava v. 23.

catuṣkoṭivinirmuktās tena dharmās tvayodhitāḥ/ vijñānasyāpy avijñeyā vācāṃ kim uta gocarāḥ//

Citations from the Acintyastava are taken from Lindtner (1982).

361 BBh p. 38.

tat punaḥ katamat/ bodhisattvānāṃ buddhānāṃ ca bhagavatāṃ dharmanairātmyapraveśāya praviṣṭena suviśuddhena ca sarvadharmāṇāṃ nirabhilāpyasvabhāvatām ārabhya prajñaptivādasvabhāvanirvikalpajñeyasamena jñānena yo gocaraviṣayaḥ/ sā sauparamā tathatā niruttarā jñeyaparyantagatā yasyāḥ samyak sarvadharmapravicayā nirvartante nābhivartante/.

In the next two sections of the BBh, Asaṅga appeals to reasoning (*yukti*) and scriptural authority (*āgama*), respectively, to prove the inexpressible character of dharmas.

assertions. In the BBh, Asaṅga quotes scriptural authority to defend this point: "Indeed, by whatsoever name whatsoever dharma is mentioned, that dharma is not found therein, for that is the true nature of all dharmas."[362] Asaṅga explains that although we may use certain designations such as form (*rūpa*) to refer to dharmas, the referent of these terms does not exist in the ultimate sense.

In denying that dharmas are the referent of ultimate truth, Nāgārjuna and the early Yogācāra writers re-evaluate the process and the existential status of verbalization. Both Nāgārjuna and the early Yogācāra writers attack the idea of a natural correspondence between ideas and reality. As Asaṅga puts it, name and object are incidental (*āgantuka*) to one another.[363] That is to say, names refer to their object, not because of an inherent connection with that object, but only by virtue of past familiarity, or convention.[364] Names have meaning because they are learned.

This means that, contrary to the view commonly held among Indian thinkers during the times of both Nāgārjuna and Asaṅga, just because we can conceptualize and give a name to something, does not mean that thing truly

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362 BBh p. 48.

yena yena hi nāmnā vai yo yo dharmo 'bhilapyate/ na sa saṃvidyate tatra dharmāṇāṃ sā hi dharmateti//

Asaṅga attributes this verse to the Bhavasaṃkrānti-sūtra. The MVy (listing 1379) records this text as one of the earliest Mahāyāna *sūtras*. There are commentaries on this text attributed to Asaṅga and Nāgārjuna: the Bhavasaṃkrānti-ṭīkā and the Bhavasaṃkrānti-śāstra, respectively.

363 MSA 11:41. Hsüan tsang's commentary to this stanza remarks that Asaṅga's proclamation is in opposition to those who say that sound (*śabda*) and objects (*artha*) are always united and arise simultaneously.

364 See, for example, MVbh 5:14.

exists.[365] Neither names nor objects exist, according to Nāgārjuna. As he asserts, "Name does not imply existence for us, because we do not even say that name exists."[366] To back up his assertion, Nāgārjuna demonstrates how the theory that name must have an existent object leads to an absurd conclusion. He takes as an example the name "non-existent." If it applies to something existent, he says, then that thing would be both existent and non-existent. If it applies to something non-existent, this would contradict the original hypothesis that the existence of a name necessarily implies the existence of its object.[367] Asaṅga likewise denies the existence of both name and object: the intrinsic nature (*svabhāva*) and specifications (*viśeṣa*) which are attributed to name or object, he says, are nothing but provisional designations (*prajñapti*). Name and objects are merely mental talk (*manojalpa*).[368]

Asaṅga argues against the idea of a natural correspondence between name and object by appealing to the traditional means of knowledge (*pramāṇa*).[369] The bulk of his argument calls upon logical reasoning

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365 This view is espoused and defended, in particular, by Nyāya philosophers. For further discussion, see B.K. Matilal "Reference and Existence in Nyāya and Buddhist Logic." JIP 1 (1970) 83-110.

366 VIG 57.

367 VIG 58.

368 MS 3:7. .

369 The number of accepted *pramāṇas* varies among the orthodox Indian traditions. The Vedānta proposes six: *pratyakṣa* (direct perception through the senses), *anumāna* (inference), *upamāna* analogy or comparison), *śabda* or *āptavacana* (verbal authority), *anupalbhdhi* or *abhāva-pratyakṣa* (non-perception or negative proof), and *arthāpatti* (inference from circumstances). The Nyāya admits only four, denying the last two. The Sāṃkhya admits only three (*pratyakṣa*, *anumāna*, and *śābda*). The early Yogācāra writers also

(*yukti*). If we are to adopt the belief that name and object are inherently connected, he argues, then we must accept that to each name there corresponds a specific object. But for any given object, there are many names. (A cow, for example, could also be referred to as an animal, a four-legged animal, the source of milk, etc., depending on the context in which the cow was being discussed.) A direct existential correlation between name and object, Asaṅga concludes, is simply not rational.[370]

In Yogācāra writings, opposition to the view that name must have an existent object is often stated in the form of the assertion that everything is "name-only" (*nāma-mātra*). In his commentary to the MV, for example, Vasubandhu asserts that everything which is grasped by sensory and mental faculties is nothing but name (*nāma-mātra*). He then goes on to equate the notion of name-only with ultimate truth. Conversely, the belief that name and object are distinct and existent entities is equated with conventional truth: as Vasubandhu states, "in conventional truth, it is not realized that all this is only names."[371]

At first glance it may appear that the Yogācārin proclamation that everything is name-only posits the existence of name, and thus contradicts Nāgārjuna's stance that everything is empty. On closer examination of the early Yogācāra writings, however, it becomes clear that the assertion of name-only is regarded as compatible with the doctrine of emptiness. In fact,

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accepted these three *pramāṇas*. In his commentary to the MV, for example, Vasubandhu appeals to "three means of cognition accepted by dialecticians who are experts in such matters of reasoning" (MVbh 3:12b). See also BBh p. 37.

370 BBh 45.

371 MVbh 5:18.
saṃvṛtyā tu nedaṃ nāmamātram iti gṛhyate.

according to Asaṅga, the teaching of name-only is an antidote to reification. As he states, "to counter the concept of intrinsic nature (*svabhāva-vikalpa*), it has been taught, 'Form, O Subhūti, is nothing but name.'"[372] Here, Asaṅga takes for granted that names are not ultimately existent, and in so doing, he uses the concept of name-only (*nāma-mātra*) to deny intrinsic being.[373]

The compatibility of name-only with emptiness is further evidenced by the fact that Nāgārjuna himself asserts the notion of name-only. In his Acintyastava, for example, he writes:

> You have made evident that the entire world is merely a name (*nāma-mātra*). There is nothing expressible (*abhidheya*) which can be found apart from the expression (*abhidhāna*).[374]

For Nāgārjuna and the early Yogācāra writers, ultimate truth is not the language of dharmas, as the Sarvāstivādins claim. It is the realm of silence. As Asaṅga states, all dharmas are inexpressible (*nirabhilāpya*); they are completely beyond the reach of verbalization.[375] For this reason, Asaṅga

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372 MS 2:22.

ngo bo nyid du rnam par rtog pa'i gnyen poh'i don du bka' stal pa/ rab 'byor 'di lta ste/ gzugs zhes bya ba 'di ni ming tsam mo zhes bya ba la sogs pa'o/

The scripture being referred to is probably the Mahāprajñāpāramitā. The same passage occurs in MSAbh 11:77.

373 As we shall see below, the process of verbalization and the notion of name-only are closely associated in Yogācāra writings with the model of three natures.

374 Acintyastava v 35.

nāmamātraṃ jagat sarvam ity uccair bhāṣitaṃ tvayā/ abhidhānāt pṛthagbhūtam abhidheyaṃ na vidyate//

375 BBh pp. 44-45.

argues, the Buddha dismissed all talk of dharmas as conventional:

> ...Whatever be the designations, such as "form," etc., applied to a dharma of form, etc., those are said to be conventions. He does not accept that dharmas are identical with those designations. In this respect, he does not accept those conventions.[376]

To accept the conventions such as form, etc., Asaṅga argues, would be to fall into the faulty extreme of either reification (*samāropa*) or over-negation (*apavāda*).

Nāgārjuna and the early Yogācāra writers' assertion of the ineffability of reality implies that all teachings categorically fall within the realm of conventional discourse. Maintaining this stance consistently, Nāgārjuna asserts that he himself has no proposition (*pratijñā*).[377] In the following passage, he asserts that even the teaching of emptiness, which is pivotal to his thought, is nothing more than an expedient figure of speech:

> Nothing should be described as empty, non-empty, both [empty and non-empty], or neither [empty nor

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376 BBh, p. 49.

rūpādisaṃjñake vastuni yā rūpam ity evamādyāḥ prajñaptyaḥ tāḥ saṃvṛtaya ity ucyante tābhiḥ prajñaptibhis tasya vastunas tādātmyam ity evaṃ nopaiti tāḥ saṃvṛtīḥ/

As translated by Willis, p. 165.

377 VV 29b.

nāsti ca mama pratijñā

Citations of the VV are taken from E.H. Johnston and Arnold Kunst's edition, The Dialectical Method of Nāgārjuna: Vigrahavyāvartanī. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1990.

> non-empty]. They are asserted only for the purpose of provisional designation (*prajñapti*).[378]

According to Nāgārjuna, the Buddha himself taught that all phenomena and all conceptual categories, including emptiness, are insubstantial. In his praise to the Buddha, Nāgārjuna proclaims:

> You have announced that all dharmas are merely abstractions (*kalpanā*). Even the abstraction through which emptiness is conceived is said to be unreal.[379]

In proclaiming the limitations of all language, including philosophical discourse, Nāgārjuna goes so far as to assert that the Buddha did not teach at all.

> The cessation of all mental apprehension is the blessed cessation of all frivolous talk (*prapañca*). Nowhere, and to no one has the Buddha preached any Dharma.[380]

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378 MMK 22:11.
śūnyam iti na vaktavyam aśūnyam iti vā bhavet/ ubhayaṃ nobhayaṃ ceti prajñapty arthaṃ tu kathyate//

379 Acintyastava 36.
kalpanāmātram ity asmāt sarvadharmāḥ prakāṣitāḥ/ kalpanāpy asatī proktā yayā śūnyaṃ vikalpyate//

380 MMK 25:24.
sarvopalambhopaśamaḥ prapañcopaśamaḥ śivaḥ/ na kvacit kasyacit kaścid dharmo buddhena deśitaḥ//

In spite of such a dramatic declaration, Nāgārjuna clearly accepts a number of scriptures as authentic teachings of the Buddha. Indeed, for Nāgārjuna, as well as for the early Yogācāra writers, the two truths provide the fundamental framework for interpreting the words of the Buddha.

In placing the Buddha's teachings within the category of conventional truth, Nāgārjuna and the early Yogācāra writers by no means deny their religious value: although the teachings do not express ultimate reality, they direct one toward it. The distinction between these two functions of religious teaching is expressed by Mervyn Sprung with the terms "demonstration" (his translation of *upadiśyate*) and "monstration" (*deśyate*). Sprung points out that while demonstration (explicit teaching) of *paramārtha* is not possible according to Nāgārjuna, monstration of it (pointing to it) is possible, and indeed necessary.[381] The value of religious teachings, therefore, lies primarily in usefulness in the path toward liberation rather than its literal correspondence with ultimate reality. Possessing both supreme wisdom and supreme compassion, the Buddha adapted his teachings to make them as spiritually efficacious as possible for each particular audience he addressed.

In a number of instances, Nāgārjuna and the early Yogācāra writers appeal to the distinction between two levels of truth to address apparent contradictions within Buddhist doctrine. In his MS, for example, Asaṅga raises the question of how we are to interpret the fact that in some instances the Buddha taught that all dharmas are eternal, in others that they are

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381 Sprung, "The Mādhyamika Doctrine of Two Realities as a Metaphysic," in Sprung ed. (1973) p. 47.

transitory, and in yet still others that they are neither eternal nor transitory.[382] He answers this question through the interpretive lens of the two truths, asserting that "in the Śrāvakayāna and the Mahāyāna, the Buddha taught, from the standpoint of conventional truth, the existence of the individual (*pudgala*) and of intrinsic nature (*svabhāva*), and the distinction (*viśeṣa*) between dharmas."[383]

For both Nāgārjuna and the early Yogācāra writers, this method of interpretation is critical in asserting the authenticity of central Mahāyāna doctrines. They argue that while certain Mahāyāna teachings may appear to contradict previously accepted Buddhist doctrines, this contradiction dissolves when one realizes that all these doctrines are pointers toward, rather than direct expressions of ultimate reality. For example, Nāgārjuna writes of the Buddha,

> That both the agent and the action are self-dependent, has been expressed conventionally by you. However, you are convinced that both are established in mutual dependence.
>
> No agent exists and no experiencer exists. Merit and demerit are dependently arisen. It has been declared by you, master of speech, that that which is dependently arisen is unarisen.[384]

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382 MS 2:30.

At times Asaṅga and Vasubandhu use the model of three natures to make sense of the Buddha's teachings. In MS II:30 and SN Chap. 7, the three natures and three types of lack-of-intrinsic-nature, respectively, are introduced as a way of explaining apparently contradictory teachings of the Buddha.

383 MS 2:31.

nyan thos kyi theg pa'am/ theg pa chen por gang zag dang chos kyi ngo bo nyid dang khyad par kun rdzob kyi bden pa'i tshul du bstan pa'o/

384 Lokātītastava 8-9.

Skt: *kartā svatantraḥ karmāpi tvayoktaṃ vyavahārataḥ/ parasparāpekṣikī*

In discussing Nāgārjuna's use of the two truths, Luis Gómez calls attention to Nāgārjuna's deep concern with the possibility that certain elements in the already formed body of Buddhist teachings could be incompatible with his own doctrines. Gómez goes so far as to assert that this dilemma is the basis for Nāgārjuna's articulation of the two truths:

> On the one hand, he seeks to derive as much as possible of his doctrines from the rhetoric of older speculations and dogmas. On the other hand, he is forced to construct a hierarchy of two levels of truth, by means of which he will secure a place among Buddhist "truth" to the specifics of the path as taught in the sūtras.[385]

This is not to say that for Nāgārjuna and Asaṅga the model of two truths is merely a hermeneutical device for subordinating competing views within the Buddhist fold. (As we saw in the quotation from the MS, Asaṅga

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tu siddhis te 'bhimatānayoḥ// na kartāsti na bhokrāsti puṇyāpuṇyaṃ pratītyajam/ yat pratītya na taj jātaṃ proktaṃ vācaspate tvayā//

Tib: *byed po rang dbang las nyid kyang// tha snyad du ni khyod kyis bstan/ phan tshun bltos pa can nyid du// grub par khyod ni bzhed pa lags/ byed po yod min spyod paāng med// bsod nams de min rten 'brel skyes/ brten nas skyes gang ma skyes zhes// tshig gi bdag po khyod kyis gsungs/*

See also Nāgārjunā's Vyavahārasiddhi 5: " Similarly *all* the [twelve] members of existence (*bhavāṅga*) are [simply] conventional designations (*vyavahārataḥ prajñapti*). Consequently all phenomena such as extinction (*nirodhādi*) have [only] been advocated [by the Buddhas] with a specific purpose." (*de ltar srid pa'i yan lag kun// tha snyad kyis ni gdags pa ste/ 'de ltar 'gog la sogs pa yi// chos kun dgongs te gsungs pa yin*)

Citations from the Lokātītastava are taken from Lindtner (1982).

385 Gómez (1976) p. 151.

categorizes even the teachings of the Mahāyāna as conventional.) Rather, the categorization of the Buddha's teachings as conventional is part of a larger argument regarding the nature of the absolute and the use of language to understand and express it.

According to Nāgārjuna, it is not only incorrect to regard the teaching of emptiness as ultimate truth, it is spiritually detrimental. The grasping onto emptiness as a viewpoint is as dangerous a mistake as any other kind of grasping. Nāgārjuna warns against this mistake several times in his MMK. He writes, for example, that "The victorious ones (*jina*-s) have proclaimed emptiness as the refutation of all viewpoints (*dṛṣti*). Those, on the other hand, who hold emptiness as a viewpoint, are said to be incurable."[386] In even stronger terms, Nāgārjuna asserts:

> A wrongly conceived emptiness ruins a slow-witted person. It is like a snake which is wrongly seized, or a wrongly acquired knowledge.
>
> Thus the sage's mind recoiled from teaching the dharma, thinking that the slow-witted might misunderstand it.[387]

Despite the close correspondence we have observed between Nāgārjuna and the early Yogācāra writers in their treatment of the two

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386 MMK 13:8.

śūnyatā sarvadṛṣṭīnāṃ proktā niḥsaraṇaṃ jinaiḥ/ yeśāṃ tu śūnyatādṛśṭis tān asādhyān babhāṣire//

387 MMK 24:11-12.

vināśayati durdṛṣṭā śūnyatā mandamedhasaṃ/ sarpo yathā durgṛhīto vidyā vā duṣprasādhitā//

ataś ca pratyudāvṛttaṃ cittaṃ deśayituṃ muneḥ/ dharmaṃ matvāsya dharmasya mandair duravagāhatāṃ//

truths, it is frequently remarked within modern scholarship that the Yogācāra school differs from the Madhyamaka in its interpretation of this doctrine. In particular, the two schools tend to be characterized as differing in their conceptions of the conventional. A.K. Chatterjee, for example, summarizes the Madhyamaka position regarding conventional reality as follows: "The Mādhyamika concludes that our entire experience is purely subjective; things have only an apparent existence (saṃvṛti); in reality they are imaginary (kalpita) and subjective."[388] According to Chatterjee, "this wholesale rejection of all experience as illusory appeared to be an extreme position and could not be maintained for long." Chatterjee thus regards the development of the Yogācāra as "a return to speculation and to constructive metaphysics." While the Yogācārins accepted the Mādhyamika assertion of *dharma-śūnyatā* and their criticism of the Sautrāntika realism, he says, their

> ...revolt against the extremism of the Mādhyamika centres around the interpretation of subjectivity. For the Mādhyamika subjectivity creates unreality and is itself unreal; the Yogācāra however contends that subjectivity, though the source of unreality, is real.[389]

Chatterjee, along with other modern scholars, characterizes the Yogācāra interpretation of the conventional as more positive both in the existential sense, in that the Yogācārins are more willing to assert the existence of conventional reality; and in the soteriological sense, in that they consider

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388 Chatterjee (1987) pp. 10-11.

389 Chatterjee (1987) p. 11.

conventional reality as a necessary part of working towards nirvāṇa.

Chatterjee's analysis is problematic, however, in that it mixes indiscriminately different phases of the development of the Madhyamaka and Yogācāra schools. His depiction of the Madhyamaka stance on conventional reality draws in large part from Prāsaṅgika thinkers such as Candrakīrti, who postdated Nāgārjuna by approximately four centuries. By this time, there clearly was a difference in Madhyamaka and Yogācāra interpretations of the conventional realm. Gadjin Nagao carefully addresses this difference through a close examination of the etymology and various meanings of the term "*saṃvṛti*."[390] Nagao notes a difference between the writings of Candrakīrti, which use the term "*saṃvṛti*," and the writings of Sthiramati, which use the term "*saṃvṛtti*" (double t).[391] The former term is derived from the verbal root √vṛ, which means "to cover." The latter term comes from the root √vṛt, which means "to turn." Both *saṃvṛti* and *saṃvṛtti* have "conventional" as their primary meaning. They differ, however, in their secondary meanings: *saṃvṛti* has the meaning "covering" or "concealment," while *saṃvṛtti* has the meaning "to turn or go towards," "to come into being," or "to be produced."

According to Nagao, Candrakīrti focuses on the former meaning, emphasizing the falsity of the conventional realm. For him, *saṃvṛti* is a negative concept: it is that which covers up and prevents us from seeing *paramārtha*. In the Prasannapadā, for example, Candrakīrti defines *saṃvṛti*

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390 Gadjin Nagao. "An Interpretation of the Word '*Saṃvṛti*' (Convention) in Buddhism," in Nagao (1991).

391 As Nagao concedes, the difference may simply be a matter of style (as in the use of *sattva* rather than *satva*), or it may be the copyist's choice. Ibid., p. 14.

as that which completely covers or obscures.[392] On the other hand, Sthiramati, who uses the form *saṃvṛtti*, emphasizes the idea of the conventional as emergent from and leading toward the absolute. The opposing interpretations of Candrakīrti and Sthiramati arise, according to Nagao, naturally through the expansion of a contradiction inherent in the word *saṃvṛti*. Nagao argues that for Candrakīrti and Sthiramati, the difference in choice between verbal roots is indicative of a difference in their overall philosophies.

As Nagao points out, the term *saṃvṛti*, which is the form used by Nāgārjuna and most Buddhist thinkers after him, contains both the meaning "to cover" and the meaning "to come into being." I would argue that in Nāgārjuna's treatment of the conventional, both the positive and negative dimensions of *saṃvṛti* still inhere. Although Nāgārjuna warns against grasping onto any particular teaching, he should not be misunderstood as proposing a wholesale rejection of conventional discourse. Indeed, it is precisely because the ultimate truth is ineffable that the conventional truth is necessary. As Nāgārjuna states:

> ...we do not speak without granting the conventional perspective.... And also, having granted relative truth, it is not by having rejected conventional truth that we say all things are empty. Indeed, it is not possible to teach the dharma without recourse to relative truth. As it is said,

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392 PP p. 492, ln. 10.

Louis de La Vallé Poussin, ed. Mūlamadhyamakakārikās (Mādhyamakasūtras) de Nāgārjuna avec la Prasannapadā Commentaire de Candrakīrti. Bibliotheca Buddhica vol. 4. St. Petersburg: L'Académie Impériale des Sciences, 1913.

'The ultimate is not taught without resorting to the conventional, and nirvana is not reached without resorting to the ultimate.' Thus, like my statement, all things are empty and that all things are devoid of intrinsic nature follows from both.[393]

Nāgārjuna's statement is both an acknowledgment of the limitations of his own teachings and an assertion of the necessity of the conventional. Conventional discourse is not harmful in and of itself: it is only harmful when it is mistaken for ultimate truth.

It was not until later (toward the latter half of the sixth century CE) that either the positive or negative aspects of the term *saṃvṛti* were emphasized to the near exclusion of the other. Candrakīrti's interpretation of the conventional is clearly more negativistic than that of the early Yogācāra writers. However, this does not imply, as Chatterjee contends, that the Yogācāra school arose in opposition to such negativistic interpretations. While it may be the case that later Yogācārins wrote in opposition to Madhyamaka thinkers such as Candrakīrti, we have no basis for interpolating this opposition back onto the early phases of the Madhyamaka and Yogācāra schools.

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393 VV 28 and commentary.

api ca na vayaṃ vyavahārasatyamanabhyupagamya vyavahārasatyaṃ pratyākhyāya kathayāmaḥ śūnyāḥ sarvabhāvā iti/ na hi vyavahārasatyamanāgamya śakyā dharmadeśanā kartum/ yathoktaṃ vyavahāramanāśrsitya paramārtho na deśyate/ paramārthamanāgamya nirvāṇaṃ nādhigamyata iti// tasmānmadvacanavacchūyāḥ sarvabhāvāḥ sarvabhāvānāṃ ca niḥsvabhāvatvamubhayathopapadyamānamiti/ yatpunarbhava toktaṃ pratiṣedhapratiṣecho 'pyevamiti mataṃ bhavet tadasadeva evaṃ tava pratijñā lakṣaṇato dūṣyate na mameti//

The passage to which Nāgārjuna refers here is from MMK 24:10: *vyavahāram anāśritya paramārtho na deśyate/ paramārtham anāgamya nirvāṇaṃ nādhigamyate//*

There is no evidence within the philosophical literature that the early Yogācāra authors drew a distinction between their own interpretation of the two truths and the interpretation presented by Nāgārjuna. Furthermore, the preceding comparison of the treatment of the two truths by Nāgārjuna and the early Yogācārins clearly indicates a strong continuity in their understanding of this doctrine. Any depiction of the overall relation between the Madhyamaka and Yogācāra schools needs to account for this continuity, as well as for the differences which arose at a later date.

With this in mind, I propose that instead of seeing Candrakīrti and other later Mādhyamikas as continuing Nāgārjuna's Madhyamaka school, and the early Yogācārins as founding a separate Yogācāra school, we regard all these writers as inheritors and upholders of Nāgārjuna's thought. This depiction, which, so far, is based upon a close analysis of the two truths in the thought of Nāgārjuna and of the early Yogācāra writers, corresponds with the analysis in the previous chapter of the doxographical indications in the early Yogācāra literature. In both cases, the early Yogācāra writings fit within the Mahāyāna generally. There are no indications of the early Yogācāra as a movement diverging from any other elements within the Mahāyāna.

IV. The Three Natures in Early Yogācāra Thought

We have seen that the early Yogācāra presentation of the two truths is compatible with that of Nāgārjuna. While the early Yogācāra writers accept the model of two truths, however, they appeal to the three natures as the principal model for explaining the world. In his text devoted to expounding the three natures, Vasubandhu states, "The three natures: the imaginary, the

dependent and the perfected, are accepted to be the most profound thing to be known by the wise."[394] The centrality of the three natures in early Yogācāra thought is indicated by the epithets which they are given. Throughout chapter three of the MV, the three natures are referred to as the *mūla-tattva* (the fundamental reality), and in the MS, they are termed the *jñeya-lakṣaṇa* (the characteristics of things to be known). In the MS, moreover, the model of three natures serves as an organizing principle of the text.[395] In his commentary to the BBh, Asaṅga states,

> The meaning of all the provisional-meaning *sūtrāntas* is guided by the Three Natures. One should understand the meaning as the Tathāgata has stated it in innumerable ways in terms of the Three Natures, in its true significance; and as the Bodhisattvas possessed of his Teaching have explained it in its true significance.[396]

Aramaki sums up the centrality of the three nature theory in Yogācāra thought as follows:

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394 TSN 1.
kalpitaḥ paratantraś ca pariniṣpanna eva ca/ trayaḥ svabhāvā dhīrāṇāṃ gambhīraṃ jñeyam iṣyate//

395 The *sūtra* is divided into ten teachings, all of which are said to be contained in the Mahāyāna but not in the Śrāvakayāna. The three natures comprise the second of these teachings. The subsequent chapters carry over the basic organizing principle of the three natures, covering such topics as the entrance into the three natures, the cause of the entrance of the three natures, etc. (MS Pra 3).

396 Viniścayasaṃgrahaṇi 24b:8. As translated by Willis, p. 111.

> The *trisvabhāva* theory, first appearing as a more or less separate analysis of the structure of voidness (*śūnyatā*) or the ultimate reality, grows to be the central concept of the philosophy through its fusion with the concept of *abhūtaparikalpa*, which has, for its part, shown a tendency to become the central concept in some of the so-called Maitreya treatises. It is Asaṅga's Mahāyānasamgraha that has finally established the *trisvabhāva* and especially the *paratantrasvabhāva* as the central concept of the whole system.[397]

As Aramaki indicates, while the early Yogācāra writers are credited with developing the model of three natures, this model was not entirely new to Asaṅga and Maitreya. The early Yogācāra writers themselves indicate their indebtedness to earlier sources for this teaching. It is difficult, however, to ascertain which canonical formulations of the three natures they could have had access to. In his MS, Asaṅga refers to the teaching of the three natures in the "*Vaipulya-sūtras*."[398] The cognomen *vaipulya*, whose literal meaning is "extensive," was commonly used to refer to the Mahāyāna *sūtras* in general.[399] It is not clear, therefore, which specific *sūtra* or *sūtras*

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397 Aramaki, Noritoshi. "Paratantrasvabhāva --A Diagrammatic Account." Part 1. JIBS 15:2 (1967) 40-41.

398 MS 2:26.

399 Nakamura (1980) p. 154.

The SP and the Lalitavistara (LV) use the term to refer to themselves (SP 1:3, 16:4, 98:3, 98:11; LV 7:9). In the Abhidharmasamuccaya, Asaṅga identifies *vaitulya* with *vaipulya*, and explains that the latter term refers to the Mahāyāna. *vaipulyaṃ katamat/ bodhisattva-piṭaka-samprayuktaṃ bhāṣitam/ yad ucyate vaipulyaṃ vaidalyam apy ucyate vaitulyam apy ucyate//* ed. Pradhan p. 79. from Jaini 1958, p. 51.

For a brief discussion regarding the conception of a Mahāyāna Buddhist canon, see above, Chap. 4, Sect 6.

Asaṅga was referring to, or even whether he had a particular text in mind. Sthiramati also makes similar references to the teaching of the three natures in early Buddhist scriptures. In his Madhyāntavibhāga-ṭīkā and his Triṃśikā-bhāṣya, he counters possible objections to Yogācāra doctrine by appealing to the fact that the three natures have been taught "in the *sūtras*."[400] Although Asaṅga and Sthiramati refer to texts which predate the early Yogācāra writings, their lack of specificity leaves us to grapple with the important question of which texts they were referring to.

One possible influence upon early Yogācāra formulations of the three natures could have been the Akṣayamatinirdeśa-sūtra (AKS), a widely read early Mahāyāna text. This *sūtra* presents a differentiation of truth (*satya*) into various types. In discussing the "Bodhisattva's skill with truths" (*bodhisattvasya satyakauśalayam*), the AKS begins with a model of four truths (the four *ārya-satyas*), and then goes on to define models of three truths, two truths and one truth.[401] The three truth model here consists in conventional truth (*saṃvṛti-satya*), ultimate truth (*paramārtha-satya*), and the truth of characteristics (*lakṣaṇa-satya*). These are explained as follows: conventional truth consists of worldly designations along with everything

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400 MVṭika 1:4.

The text asks, "If all of this is mere representation, then how is it that the *sūtras* are not contradicted?" Sthiramati answers, "for in the sūtras the three natures are spoken of: the *parikalpita*, the *paratantra* and the *pariniṣpanna*. There is no contradiction," *adi vijñaptimātramevedaṃ kathaṃ na sūtravirodhaḥ/ sūtreṣu hi trayaḥ svabhāvāuktāḥ parikalpitaḥ paratantraḥ/* S. Yamaguchi, ed. Madhyāntavibhāgaṭīkā. Nagoya: Nakaku, 1934.

401 Akṣayamatinirdeśa-sūtra (AKS) pp. 269-275.

Passages from the AKS taken from Jens Braarvig's Akṣayamatinirdeśasūtra: The Tradition of Imperishability in Buddhist Thought. vol. 2. Oslo: Solum Forlag, 1993.

which is expressed with syllables, words and designations.[402] Ultimate truth is the absence of all activity, even of thoughts.[403] And the truth of characteristics is that all characteristics have one characteristic, and that one characteristic is the absence of characteristics.[404] The commentary goes on to state that the truth of characteristics is really the same as the absolute truth: it is a way to understand the absolute truth.[405]

We know that Asaṅga was familiar with the AKS, for he quotes it in the MSA.[406] One may, therefore, be tempted to draw lines of equivalency

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402 *lokavyavahāro yāvad akṣaraśabdasaṃketanirdiṣṭam* (Sanskrit reconstructed by Braarvig).

403 *parmārthasatyaṃ yatra cittasyāpy apraārah kaḥ punar vādo 'kṣarāṇām* (original Sanskrit fragment).

404 *lakṣaṇasatyaṃ yad idaṃsarvalakṣaṇam ekalakṣaṇam, ekalakṣaṇam alakṣaṇam* (Sanskrit reconstructed by Braarvig).

405 AKS pp. 269-270.

gzhan yang byang chub sems dpa'i bden pa rnam pa gsum ste gzhan yang bden pa rnam pa gsum gang 'di kun rdzob kyi bden pa dang de la kun rdzob kyi dben pa gang zhe na kun rdzob kyi bden pa don dam pa'i bden pa mtshan nyid kyi bden pa de la kun rdzob kyi bden pa 'jig rten gyi tha snyad dang, yi ge dang, sgra dang, brdas bstan pa ji snyed pa ji snyed pa ji snyed 'jig rten gyi tha snyad yi ge sgra brda ji snyed

The two truths are said to be *vyavahārasatya* and *paramārthasatya*. Finally, the one truth is "not to impute anything to any moment of existence, but to bring living beings who have fallen into such imputation to truth: *tatraikasatyaṃyo 'yāṃ sarvadharmeṣu asamāropaḥ, samāropapatitānāṃ sattvānāṃ satyāvatāraṇatā//*

406 The AKS is quoted in MSA 4:20. Although Asaṅga mentions the AKS by name, the text of the MSA does not seem to correspond to any portion of the AKS. The passage in the MSA outlines the development of *bodhisittotpāda* with similes in 22 stages, each stage is said to correspond to one or more of the 80 imperishables in the AKS. The similes, however, are not found in the AKS. The Akṣayamatiparipṛcchā depicts with similes the development of *bodhicitta* through the ten *bhūmis*, but these similes are not the same as those in MSA. (See Lévi, p. 17 n. 2, Braarvig, p. liii).

The Tibetan traditions ascribe a commentary on the AKS, the

between the tripartite scheme presented in the AKS and the *trisvabhāva* presented by Asaṅga and Vasubandhu. In doing so, one would equate the imagined and perfected natures with conventional and ultimate truths, respectively, and the dependent nature with the truth of characteristics. These connections, however, are nothing more than speculative. In no instances do early Yogācāra writings refer to the AKS's notion of *lakṣaṇa-satya*, much less equate it with the dependent nature. Furthermore, there is the basic difference that the model in the AKS is one about truth (*satya*), while the early Yogācāra model is about *svabhāva*.[407] The AKS's differentiation of truth into three types may have set some precedent for the conception of three natures; it can not, however, be identified as a primary source for this teaching.

Another possible influence on early Yogācāra formulations of the three natures may be found in the writings of Harivarman (c. 250 CE). In his Satyasiddhi,[408] Harivarman postulates three levels of existence

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Akṣayamatinirdeśa-sūtra, to Vasubandhu, but the fact that this commentary quotes from the Sūtralaṃkāravṛttibhāṣya, the Triṃśikābhāṣya, the Pañcaskandhaprakaraṇavaibhāṣya and the Abhidharmasamuccayabhāṣya (all of which are generally accepted to postdate Vasubandhu), make it extremely unlikely that Vasubandhu was its author. (See Braarvig p. cxxviii-cxxx.)

According to the Tibetan biographies of Asaṅga and Vasubandhu, the Akṣayamatinirdeśa-sūtra, along with the Daśabhūmi-sūtra were chosen by Asaṅga as texts to convert Vasubandhu to the Mahāyāna. Asaṅga assigned two of his disciples to memorize these two texts and recite them within the hearing of Vasubandhu. Upon hearing them, Vasubandhu was converted to the Mahāyāna. (Chattopadhyaya, pp. 168-169; Obermiller (1931-1932) p. 143.)

407 For a further discussion regarding the difference between *satya* and *svabhāva*, see below, pp.238-241.

408 ed. and tr. by N. Aiyaswami Sastri. Satyasiddhiśāstra of Harivarman in Gaekwad's Oriental Series nos. 159 and 165. Baroda: Oriental Institute, 1975 and 1978.

(conceptual, real and ultimate) that correspond to three types of object (concepts, dharmas and nirvāṇa, respectively). For each level of existence, Harivarman identifies a different type of *citta*. In other words, he posits three levels of existence which correspond to three aspects of mind. It has been suggested that Harivarman's tripartite scheme is the link between Nāgārjuna's two truths and the Yogācāra three natures.[409] While Harivarman's model may provide additional evidence for the argument for continuity between Nāgārjuna's two truths and the early Yogācāra three natures, however, there is no conclusive evidence that it influenced the thought of Asaṅga and Vasubandhu. It is certainly unlikely that Harivarman's Satyasiddhi is the authority which Asaṅga and Sthiramati appeal to in the above passages, since the source they refer to is a *sūtra*.[410]

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409 Naoya Funahashi IBK 11:1 1963, 215-218 (as summarized by Nakamura (1980) p. 113.

Ratnākaraśānti, a Yogācāra writer of the early eleventh century CE, explains the three natures by using Harivarman's conception of the three levels of truth: *de la dang po ni byis pa rnams kyis de bzhin kho nar brtags pas/ btags pa'i yod pa ste/ rdzas su yod pa yang ma yin la/ don dam par yod pa yang ma yin no// gnyis pa ni rten cing 'brel par 'byung bas rdzas su yod pa yin te/ btags par yod pa ma yin no// gsum pa ni rnam par dag pa'i don du dmigs pas don dam par yod pa ste* (Prajñāparamitopadeśa Derge 40079, 138b²ff=Peking 5579, 156b⁶ff)

410 For a discussion of Harivarman's possible influence on the development of a three truth doctrine in Chinese Buddhism, see Whalen Lai, "Nonduality of the Two Truths in Sinitic Mādhyamika: Origin of the 'Third Truth'" JIABS 2:2 (1979) 45-65.

Lai, although he acknowledges the influence of Harivarman upon Chinese Buddhist scholars during the 5th and 6th centuries, argues that a three nature theory arose separately and independently in China. According to Lai, it came out of a Chinese misunderstanding in which the two truths were thought to refer to ontological realms (i.e. a nirvāṇic realm of emptiness and a saṃsāric realm of being) rather than two levels of discourse. Based on this misunderstanding, Lai argues, the Chinese sought a higher truth where saṃsāra could equal nirvāṇa. Thus they developed the notion of a third truth.

There does exist one identifiable sūtric source for the teachings of the three natures which Asaṅga and later Yogācāra thinkers might have drawn from. This is the chapter of the Aṣṭādaśasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā commonly known as the "*Maitreyaparipṛcchā*," or, "The Questions of Maitreya."[411] In this chapter, the Buddha preaches to the Bodhisattva Maitreya the distinction between three types of form (*rūpa*). These are: imagined form (*parikalpita-rūpa*), discerned form (*vikalpita-rūpa*) and the dharmic nature of form (*dharmatā-rūpa*). Among later Mādhyamikas and Yogācārins, the Maitreya Chapter became a focal point in a debate regarding the orthodoxy of the teachings of three natures. Yogācāra writers such as Ratnākaraśānti (fl. 1030 CE) defended the Yogācāra teaching of three natures by pointing to its presence in this section of the Prajñāpāramitā corpus. According to Ratnākaraśānti, the doctrine of three natures presented in the Maitreya Chapter was the same as that found in the foundational Yogācāra text, the Samdhinirmocana.[412] Since Mahāyānists unanimously accepted the *prajñāpāramitā* literature as the definitive (*nītārtha*) teaching of the Buddha, this meant they had to accord the same status to the same teaching found in the Yogācāra *sūtras*.

Ratnākarśānti's argument presented a problem for Madhyamaka thinkers, for although they maintained the direct authority of the

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411 Chap. 83 of the Aṣṭādaśasāhasrikāprajñāpāramitā P. No. 731, Di 243a3.
For a discussion and Sanskrit edition of this Chapter, see Conze, Edward, and Iida Shotaro. "'Maitreya's Questions' in the Prajñāpāramitā." Mélanges d'Indianisme à la Mémoire de Louis Renou. Paris: Éditions E. De Boccard, 1968, 229-242.
For a translation, see Edward Conze's The Large Sutra on Perfect Wisdom with the Divisions of the Abhisamayālaṅkāra Berkelely: University of California Press, 1975, pp. 644-652.

412 See Conze and Iida (1968) p. 233.

Prajñāpāramitā-sūtras, they assigned the teaching of three natures to the level of interpretable (*neyārtha*) teaching.[413] The Madhyamaka scholar Candrakīrti resolved this problem by arguing that although most of the Prajñāpāramitā literature was *nītārtha*, this particular portion dealing with the three natures was *neyārtha*. Years later, Tsong-kha-pa, although he frequently relied upon Candrakīrti's authority, resolved the problem in a different way. Unlike Candrakīrti, he accepted the direct authority of the Maitreya Chapter. He did not, however, accept that the teachings it contained were the same as the teaching of the three natures in the Saṃdhinirmocana. In this way, Tsong-kha-pa could maintain the Mahāyāna position that the entire corpus of Prajñāpāramitā literature was *nītārtha*, while also asserting that the Yogācāra teaching of three natures was *neyārtha*.[414]

It is clear from these debates that the Maitreya Chapter was an important element in Mahāyāna interpretations of the three natures during the time of Candrakīrti and later. There is a problem, however, in identifying it as a source for the early Yogācāra development of the three natures. As Edward Conze suggests, this chapter may be a later addition to the Aṣṭādaśasāhasrikā, postdating Asaṅga and Vasubandhu. Conze points out that the Maitreya Chapter "differs radically from the remainder of the Prajñāpāramitā in vocabulary, style and doctrinal content." Conze's analysis

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413 For a discussion of the concepts of *nītartha* and *neyartha* in Buddhist hermeneutics, see Étienne Lamotte's "The Assessment of Textual Interpretation in Buddhism," in Donald Lopez (1988) pp. 11-27. See also AK ix. 246-248.

414 Legs bshad snyin po To. no. 5396 114 pp. Pha 103b-111b. See Thurman's translation (1987) pp. 355-363.

concurs with Bu-ston's description of this section as a later addition.[415]

After eliminating the Aksayamatinirdeśa-sūtra and the Astādaśasāhasrikā as sūtric sources for early Yogācāra development of the three natures, one may begin to wonder whether Asaṅga's references to earlier texts were primarily a device for lending authority to a relatively new teaching. There is one sūtric source, however, which Asaṅga clearly had access to in his development of the model of three natures. This is the Samdhinirmocana (SN) The SN contains an entire chapter devoted to teaching the three natures, and a subsequent chapter which teaches the complementary model of the three "non-natures" (*niḥsvabhāva*).[416] We know, furthermore, that Asaṅga had access to the SN, and drew heavily from it as an authoritative source for his writings.[417] This text seems to contain the only extensive references to the three natures which can be dated

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415 Obermiller (1931-1932) Part 2, p. 50. It should also be noted that the Maitreya chapter is missing from the Satasāhasrikā, as well as the Gilgit manuscript of the Astadaśasāhasrikāprajñāpāramitā, and all Chinese versions of this latter text.

416 The Yogācāra writings usually refer to the model of three natures (*trisvabhāva, ngo bo nyid gsum*). In some instances, however, (including chapter 6 of the SN) they use the term three characteristics (*trilakṣana, mtshan nyid ni gsum*). There appears to be no significant distinction between the usage of *lakṣaṇa* and *śvabhāva*. The MS, for example uses the terms interchangeably. It is interesting that when the three types of lack-of-intrinsic-nature (*triniḥsvabhāva*) are being discussed, on the other hand, *svabhāva* is used exclusively.

417 Asaṅga incorporates the SN into his Viniścaya-samgrahanī (also known as Nirnayasamgraha). Asaṅga also quotes the SN by name in the MS (MS 1:4 draws explicitly from SN p. 77, referring to the SN as *āgama*. MS 2:7 draws explicitly from SN p. 155). There is also a commentary on the SN attributed to Asaṅga. Vasubandhu's commentary to the MV quotes the SN by name (MVbh 3:14).

definitively as prior to Maitreya, Asaṅga and Vasubandhu.[418] It could very well be the sūtric source to which Asaṅga and Sthiramati refer to as an authority for their exposition of the three natures.

The teaching of the three characteristics --the imagined characteristic (*parikalpita-lakṣaṇa*), the dependent characteristic (*paratantra-lakṣaṇa*), and the perfected characteristic (*pariniṣpanna-lakṣaṇa*)-- occupies a full chapter in the SN. In brief, the *sūtra* defines the three characteristics as follows: The imagined characteristic is "the names or symbols which attribute intrinsic nature and specifications to dharmas for the purpose of conventional designation." The dependent characteristic is "the dependent origination (*pratītyasamutpāda*) of phenomena," and the perfected characteristic is "the suchness (*tathatā*) of phenomena."[419]

Above, we saw that Nāgārjuna and the early Yogācāra writers denied a natural correspondence between names and objects, and thus relegated the process of verbalization to the level of conventional truth. Here, we see that

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418 The Laṅkāvatāra-sūtra (LA) mentions the doctrine of three natures, but the dating of this text is extremely problematic. The first explicit reference to the LA occurs in the writings of Sthiramati and Dharmapāla. It has been debated among modern scholars whether or not the LA predates Asaṅga and Vasubandhu.

For a summary of the literature regarding the date of the LA, see Florin Giripescu Sutton's Existence and Enlightenment in the Laṅkāvatāra-sūtra: A Study in the Ontology and Epistemology of the Yogācāra School of Mahāyāna Buddhism. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1991. pp. 13-21.

419 SN pp. 82-83.

yon tan 'byung gnas de la chos rnams kyi kun brtags pa'i mtshan nyid gang zhe na/ ji tsam du rjes su tha snyad gdags pa'i phyir chos rnams kyi ngo bo nyid dam bye brag tu ming dang brdar rnam par bzhag pa gang yin pa'o/

yon tan 'byung gnas chos rnams kyi gzhan gyi dbang gi mtshan nyid gang zhe na/ chos rnams kyi rten cing 'brel par 'byung ba nyid de....

yon tan 'byung gnas chos rnams kyi yongs su grub pa'i mtshan nyid gang zhe na/ chos rnams kyi de bshin nyid gang yin pa ste....

the early Yogācāra writers extended this analysis by explaining the process of verbalization in terms of the three natures. In particular, we see that the mistaken identification of a name with its object is defined as the imagined nature. As the SN states, "the imagined characteristic is based upon names as attached to a referent due to some distinguishing feature."[420] Asaṅga adopts this view, defining the imagined nature as "merely name,"[421] and stating that imagination (*parikalpa*) takes name as its object.[422]

Asaṅga explicates the process of verbalization even further by dividing the imagined nature into three aspects. The imagined nature, he asserts, consists in the cause (*nimitta*) of the concept of the verbalized object; the instinct (*vāsanā*) for verbalization; and the object (*artha*) which is perceived due to such an instinct. In the following verse, Asaṅga defines the imagined nature as the cause of unreal mental construction (*abhūtaparikalpa*) which entails the projection of (disparate) name and referent.[423] Vasubandhu puts this more succinctly in his commentary to this passage, asserting that both name and referent are imaginatively constructed.[424] Another way to say this is that name and object are

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420 SN p. 87.

Yon tan 'byung gnas de la mtshan ma dang 'brel ba'i ming la brten nas ni kun brtags pa'i mtshan nyid rab tu shes so//

421 Viniścayasaṃgrahaṇī 27b:3.

Willis translates Asaṅga's commentary as follows: "How should one thoroughly know the imaginary nature? He said: One should thoroughly know the imaginary nature as being merely name, to wit, merely imagination"(Willis p. 108).

422 MS 2:16.

423 MSA 11:38-39.

424 MSAbh 11:39.

interdependent, and together make up the imagined nature. In that they are interdependent, they do not exist ultimately --i.e., neither of them exists in its own right. Asaṅga demonstrates the mutual dependence of name and object by dividing the imagined nature into five types: an object which is imagined depending on a name, a name which is imagined depending on an object, a name which is imagined depending on a name, an object which is imagined depending on an object, and both which are imagined depending on both.[425] By breaking down the relation between name and object this way, Asaṅga shows that they depend on each other in every permutation possible. Being thus entirely interdependent, they are devoid of intrinsic being. That is to say, names and objects are not the truly existent entities we ordinarily perceive them to be.

Asaṅga does not go so far as to say that name and object are completely non-existent, however: they do exist in that they arise in dependence upon one another. Asaṅga identifies this interdependent arising as the dependent nature.[426] Along the same lines, Vasubandhu defines the dependent nature as the unreal mental construction (*abhūtaparikalpa*)[427] of the world as we ordinarily experience it (that is, in terms of its imagined nature). The perfected nature, in turn, is said to transcend the imagined names and the act of imagination. As Asaṅga states, it is beyond the range of discursive thought, since it is free of verbalization (*prapañca*).[428]

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425 MS 2:19.

426 Asaṅga, for example defines the dependent nature as follows: "How should one thoroughly know the dependent nature? One should thoroughly know that it includes all constructed things (*bya by 'dus byas).*" Viniścayasaṃgrahaṇi 27b:7.

427 MVbh 1:5.

428 MSA 11:41.

The model of three natures serves as a template for explaining not only the process of verbalization, but the process of human perception and conceptualization more generally. Through the model of three natures, Asaṅga and Vasubandhu explain the workings of human consciousness, and show how and why we mistakenly perceive the world. In his treatise devoted to explicating the three natures, Vasubandhu from the very beginning sets his account within the framework of human perception. He defines the imagined nature as the way in which things appear (*yathā khyāti*): it is the world as ordinary people experience it. The dependent nature, he says, is that which appears (*yat khyāti*): it is the unreal mental creations (*asatkalpa*) which both appear before and constitute the human mind. Finally, the perfected nature is the non-existence of things in the way that they appear: it is the dependent nature stripped of the imagined nature.[429]

Later in the text, Vasubandhu clarifies these definitions through an analogy involving a magically-created elephant.[430] In this analogy, a conjurer through the use of a *mantra* causes an elephant to appear before an

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429 TSN 2-3.

"That which appears is the dependent [nature], and the way in which it appears is the imagined [nature]; because [the former] exists subject to conditions,, and because [the latter] is only a mental construction.

The non-existence throughout time of the way in which it appears of what appears should be known as the perfected nature, because of its unchangingness."

yat khyāti paratantro'sāu yathā khyāti sa kalpitaḥ/ pratyayādhīnavṛttitvāt kalpanāmātrabhāvataḥ//

tasya khyātur yathākhyānaṃ yā sadāvidyamānatā/ jñeyaḥ sa pariniṣpannaḥ svabhāvo 'nanyathātvataḥ//

430 This analogy is frequently used as a means of describing the three natures. See, for example, MSA 11:18-29, TSN 27-30, and MV 5:17b.

audience. The elephant in this analogy corresponds to the imagined nature. Even though people perceive it, it does not truly exist. The form of the elephant, i.e., the elephant as it is perceived by the audience, corresponds to the dependent nature. It is the representation or cognition of an elephant in the spectator's mind. Finally, the elephant's non-existence is the perfected nature: it is the non-existence of the duality of a perceiving subject and a perceived object.[431] In being based upon "what appears," the above definitions indicate the fundamental concern with the viewpoint of the perceiver. Reference is not made to an external reality, but to the reality which is perceived. Indeed, the belief in an external, absolutely existent world is precisely what the model of three natures denies.

In order to understand in more detail how Asaṅga and Vasubandhu construe the relation between human consciousness and the external world, it is necessary to examine, at least in brief, the concept of the storehouse consciousness (*ālayavijñāna*). Although the concept of the *ālayavijñāna* is generally considered to have been introduced and developed by the Yogācāra, Asaṅga and Vasubandhu claim that it was part of the Buddha's

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431 TSN 27-30.

"An illusion produced from the power of a mantra, appears as an elephant. But there is only an appearance there: no elephant exists at all.

The elephant is the imagined nature. Its form is the dependent [nature]. And the non-existence of the elephant there is the perfected [nature].

In the same way, the unreal mental creation, due to the root mind, with duality. But there is no duality there at all. There is only form there."

māyākṛtaṃ mantravaśāt khyāti hastyātmanā yathā/ ākāramātraṃ tatrāsti hastī nāsti tu sarvathā//

svabhāvaḥ kalpito hastī paratantras tadākṛtiḥ/ yas tatra hastyabhāvo'sāu parinispanna iṣyate/ asatkalpas tathā khyāti mūlacittād dvayātmanā/ dvayam atyantato nāsti tatrāsty ākṛtimātrakam//

mantravan mūlavijñānaṃ kāṣṭhavat tathatā matā/ hastyākāravad eṣṭavyo vikalpo hastivad dvayam//

teaching all along. As members of a tradition where innovation is disfavored rather than praised, it is not surprising that Asaṅga and Vasubandhu wish to emphasize those elements within the Buddhist teachings which, even if they were not explicit references to the storehouse consciousness, can certainly be considered as precursors to the concept's development.[432] In the MS, Asaṅga asserts that the storehouse consciousness is referred to in the Śrāvakayāna by synonyms. He presents the following passage, attributing it to the Ekottarāgama:

> People like the *ālaya*, are fond of the *ālaya*, are delighted in the *ālaya*, are attached to the *ālaya*. When the Dharma is preached for the destruction of the *ālaya*, they wish to listen and lend their ears; they put forth a will for the perfect knowledge and follow the path of truth. When the Tathāgata appears in the world, this marvelous and extraordinary Dharma appears in the world.[433]

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432 Concerning appearances of the concept of *ālayavijñāna, which* predate the Yogācāra, see William S. Waldron's "How Innovative is the *Ālayavijñāna*?" JIP 22 (1994) 199-258.

433 MS 1:11. The passage from the MS, in full, is as follows:
yang rnam grangs kyis kun gzhi rnam par shes pa nyan thos kyi theg par yang bstan te/ gcig las 'phros pa'i lung de bzhin gshegs pa 'byung ba'i phan yon rnam pa bzhi'i mdo las/ skye dgu kun gzhi la dga' ba kun gzhi la kun tu dga' ba kun gzhi las yang dag par byung ba kun gzhi la mngon par dga' ba can dag la kun gzhi spang ba'i phyir/ chos bstan na nyan 'dod la/ rna ba gtod de/ kun shes par byed par sems nye bar 'jog cing chos kyi rjes su mthun pa'i chos sgrub ste/ de bzhin gshegs pa 'jig rten du byung na ngo mtshar rmad du byung ba'i chos 'di yang 'jig rten du 'byung ngo zhes ji skad gsungs pa lta bu ste/ rnam grangs 'dis ni kun gzhi rnam par shes pa nyan thos kyi theg par yang bstan pa yin no/
Lamotte identifies this passage with the following passage in the Pali Aṅguttara Nikāya: *ālayarāmā bhikkhave pajā ālayaratā ālayasamuditā sā tathāgatena anālaye dhamme desiyamāne sussūyati sotaṃ odahati aññā cittaṃ upaṭṭhāpeti/ tathāgatassa bhikkhave arahato sammāsambuddhasssa pātubhāvā ayaṃ paṭhamo acchariyo abbhuto dhammo pātubhavati //* Aṅguttara Nikāya vol. 2, p. 131.

He concludes, "It is by this synonym [ālaya] that the storehouse consciousness is mentioned in the Śrāvakayāna." He goes on to state that storehouse consciousness was taught in the Āgama of the Mahāsāṃghikas as root consciousness (*mūlavijñāna*), and in the Āgama of the Mahīśāsaka as the aggregate which endures throughout saṃsāra (*āsaṃsārika-skandha*).[434] Other concepts which Asaṅga acknowledges as precursors to the development of *ālayavijñāna* include appropriating consciousness (*ādāna vijñāna*), mind (*citta*), receptacle (*ālaya*), member of existence (*bhavāṅga*),[435] and consciousness (*vijñāna*) as part of the *pratītyasamutpāda* formula.[436]

Regarding the first explicit mention of the storehouse consciousness in Buddhist literature, two opinions predominate among modern scholars. According to Schmithausen, the earliest presentation of the concept of storehouse consciousness occurs in the YBh. Schmithausen goes so far as to identify the particular passage in which the concept first appears. He translates this "initial passage" as follows:

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434 MS 1:11.
In the Mahīśasaka, *āsaṃsārikaskandha* (or *saṃsārakoṭiniṣṭha-skandha*) is considered to be a persisting element underlying the six kinds of consciousness.

435 MS 1:12.
In the Prajñāptivāda, *bhavāṅga-vijñāna* is considered to be a persisting element underlying the six kinds of consciousness.

436 See, for e.g.., MS 1:33, 1:59; Pratītyasamutpādavyākhya 17aff, 23b6-24a2; and Trimsikābhāsya, p. 16 ln. 16, in Sylvain Lévi's Vijñaptimātratāsiddhi. Deux Traités de Vasubandhu: Vimśatikā et Trimśikā. Paris: Bibliotheque de l'École des Hautes Etudes Librairie Ancienne Honoré Champion, 1925.

> When [a person] has entered [Absorption into] Cessation (*nirodha* (*samāpatti*)), his mind and mental [factors] have ceased; how, then, is it that [his] mind (*vijñāna*) has not withdrawn from [his] body? - [Answer: No problem;] for [in] his [case] ālayavijñāna has not ceased [to be present] in the material sense-faculties, which are unimpaired: [ālayavijñāna] which comprises (/possesses/has received) the Seeds of the forthcoming [forms of] mind (*pravṛttivijñāna*), so that they are bound to re-arise in future (i.e., after emerging from absorption).[437]

Schmithausen's identification of this initial passage goes against the majority of modern scholars who hold that the SN is an earlier text than the YBh, and thus contend that SN, whose fifth chapter discusses the storehouse consciousness, contains the earliest treatment of this concept.[438] This dating of the SN as prior to the YBh is due in part to the fact that the Viniścayasaṃgrahaṇī section of the YBh incorporates the entire text of the SN. Schmithausen, however, maintains that the portion of the YBh

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437 Samāhitā Bhūmiḥ of the Bhumivastu (Part 1) of the Yogācārabhūmi. Sanskrit version, photos of which are kept in the K.P Jayaswal Research Institute, Patna 78b5; Tibetan translation, dzi 172a6-8; Hsüan-tsang's translation T 1579, 340c27ff. *nirodhaṃ samāpannasya cittacaita sikāniruddhā bhavanti/ kathaṃ vijñānaṃ kāyād anapa krāntaṃ bhavati/ tasya hi rūpiṣv indriye/* Translation in Schmithausen (1987) p. 18.

438 Schmithausen (1987, n. 96) lists the following authors as supporting this view: Yūki, 1935, 16; 73; 142;148; Weinstein 1958, pp. 48,52; Katsumata 1974, pp. 560ff; Funahashi 1969, p 37; H 1977 p. 220; Kanukura 1980, p. 169; Nagao 1978 34r; Yokoyama 1979 p. 115, 118, 122; Nakamura (1980) p. 255 n 15; Saigusa 1983 p. 109, 320; Griffiths (1986) p. 77. See Schmithausen for full bibliographic information.

containing the initial passage was composed prior to the SN. In Schmithausen's view, the YBh was composed in several stages at different dates by different authors. He argues that although the latest layer of the text which contains the Viniścayasaṃgrahaṇī clearly postdates the SN, the earlier layers, including that which contains the initial passage, predate the SN.

Whether one points to the SN or the YBh as introducing the concept of *ālayavijñāna* to Buddhist literature, it is clear that the concept was in its early phase of systematization during the time of Asaṅga and Vasubandhu.[439] Furthermore, it is clear that the early Yogācāra writers saw the concept of *ālayavijñāna* as continuous with the Buddhist teachings which went before them. According to fundamental Buddhist teachings, what we ordinarily perceive to be the self (*ātman*) is in reality nothing more than a composite of five ever-changing aggregates (*skandhas*): matter (*rūpa*), sensation (*vedanā*), perception (*saṃjñā*), volition (*saṃskāra*), and consciousness (*vijñāna*). The aggregate of consciousness, in turn, is divided into six types: the five types of sensory consciousness[440] and mental consciousness (*manovijñāna*).

The early Yogācāra writers further subdivide the aggregate of consciousness, proposing that along with the traditional six kinds of consciousness there are two subliminal forms of consciousness, the *kliṣṭa*-

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439 Schmithausen leaves open the question of whether the first appearance of the concept of *ālayavijñāna* predates Asaṅga or not. He divides the YBh into three layers which he believes were composed by different authors at different times. Although he places the layers in relative chronological sequence, he does not provide any dates for their composition, or say which sections were composed by whom.

440 The five sensory consciousness are *cakṣūr-*, *śrotra-*, *ghrāṇa-*, *jihvā-* and *kāya-vijñāna*.

manas and the *ālayavijñāna*.[441] They fit these two forms of consciousness into the traditional scheme as follows: Instead of dividing the aggregate consciousness into six components, they divide it into three different aspects, one of which constitutes the traditional six components. The three aspects of consciousness are mind (*citta*), mental organ (*manas*), and consciousness itself (*vijñāna*). As Asaṅga states,

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441 The Ti-lun and She-lun sects in China enumerated nine kinds of consciousness, adding the *ādāna* consciousness.

> What is the definition of the aggregate of consciousness? It is mind, mental organ, and consciousness. And among these, what is mind? It is the storehouse consciousness containing all seeds, impregnated with the traces of aggregates, elements, and spheres.... And what is mental organ? It is the object of storehouse consciousness, always having the nature of self-notion (*manyanātmaka*), associated with four defilements (the false idea of self, self-love, the conceit of 'I-am' and ignorance.... What is consciousness? It consists of the six groups of consciousness (visual, auditory, olfactory, gustatory, tactile and mental).[442]

The Yogācāra treatment of the five aggregates is compared to that traditional scheme in chart on the following page.

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442 AS p. 17.

The same definitions are stated briefly in MSAbh 19:76: *tatra cittam ālayavijñānam/ manas tadālambanam ātmadṛṣṭyādisamprayuktam/ vijñānaṃ ṣaḍ vijñānakāyāḥ/*

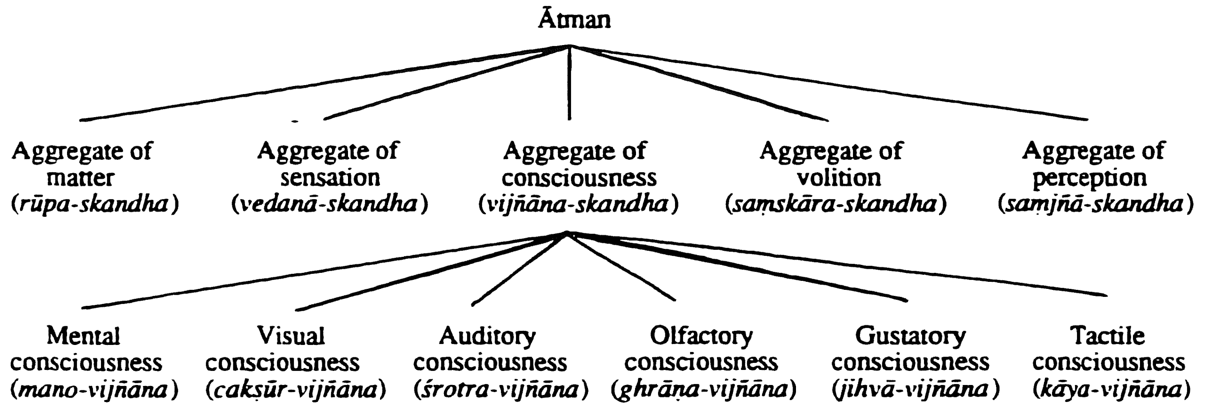
SN says that the *ālayavijñāna* is called *citta* (*sems*).

The difference between these three layers of consciousness is not quite clear. The Laṅkāvatāra-sūtra, for example, states that they have the same meaning (e.g., LA p. 332: *cittaṃ vikalpt vijñaptir mano vijñānam eva ca ālayaṃ tribhavaścestā ete cittasya paryayāḥ*).

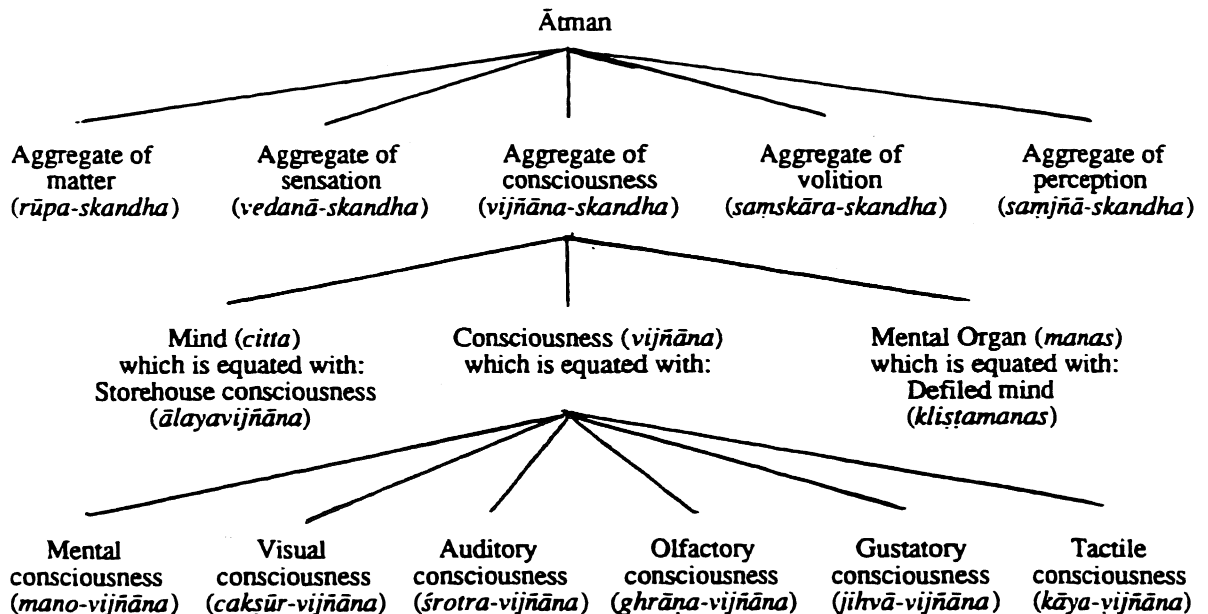
Furthermore, in the auto-commentary to his Viṃṣatikā, Vasubandhu states that *citta*, *manas*, *vijñāna*, and *vijñapti* are synonymous: *cittaṃ mano vijñānaṃ vijñaptisceti paryāyāḥ* VIMbh v. 1.

For a discussion regarding terminology for the mind and consciousness, see Brian Galloway's "*Vijñāna*, *Saṃjñā* and *Manas*." Middle Way 53:2 (1978) 72-75; and his "A Yogācāra Analysis of the Mind, Based on the *Vijñāna* section of Vasubandhu's Pañcaskandhaprakarana with Guṇaprabha's Commentary." JIABS 3:2 (1980) 7-20.

TRADITIONAL SCHEME



YOGĀCĀRA SCHEME



In defining the defiled mind (*kliṣṭamanas*) and storehouse consciousness (*ālayavijñāna*), which the early Yogācāra writers introduce as aspects of the aggregate of consciousness, it is important to note that the divisions of consciousness as the early Yogācāra writers present them are not concrete, but abstract. The analyses of consciousness which these writers present are metaphorical accounts of the different types of activity which constitute human experience. The defiled mind can be defined as a continuous, subtle notion or feeling of 'I.' It is that part of the mind which, during an act of perception, is aware of itself as a perceiving subject separate from the object perceived.[443] The storehouse consciousness is that which serves as the receptacle of the latent residues of all actions. The concept of storehouse consciousness is developed within the framework of the traditional Buddhist theory of karma, in which all actions, both physical and mental, give rise to certain consequences. According to the Yogācāra analysis of this process, each cognition or representation gives rise to "seeds" (*vāsanās* or *bījas*). These seeds are momentary, but before they expire, they produce new seeds which replace them. The continuous stream of seeds lies in and makes up the storehouse consciousness. It remains latent until under certain conditions, the seeds pass into the consciousness and produce new representations. The new representations in turn give rise to more seeds, and the whole process begins again.

The concept of the storehouse consciousness and the model of three natures are both vital components of early Yogācāra thought. Their centrality, as well as their close interrelation, is evident throughout the early Yogācāra writings. In the MS, the first two chapters are devoted to the

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443 See, for e.g.., TSN 6.

treatment of these two topics.[444] The storehouse consciousness is treated under the heading "the basis of what is knowable" (*jñeyāśraya*), and the three natures under the heading "the characteristic of that which is knowable" (*jñeyalakṣaṇa*). The three natures, therefore, can be considered as the characteristics of everything which has the *ālayavijñāna* as its basis. This general depiction of the relation between the three natures and storehouse consciousness can be understood in more detail as we work out the close connection between the storehouse consciousness and the dependent nature.

In his TSN, Vasubandhu states that the dependent nature derives its name from the fact that it exists dependent on causes.[445] In the MS, Asaṅga specifies what the causes of the dependent nature are: the dependent nature is dependent, he says, in that it is arisen from *vāsanābīja*.[446] These *vāsanābīja*, as we have just discussed, constitute the storehouse consciousness. The storehouse consciousness, therefore, can be regarded as the cause of the dependent nature. Vasubandhu expresses this cause and effect relation in his analogy of the magically created elephant. As we have

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444 In the SN also, the chapter dealing with the *ālayavijñāna* immediately precedes the chapter which introduces the model of three natures. It could be that Asaṅga was influenced by the SN in the structuring of his MS.

445 TSN 2. (See note 429 for a full citation of this verse.)

446 Asaṅga adds that the dependent nature is also dependent in that it can not subsist on its own after its arising. In MS 2:15, he states:

gal te rnam par tig pa tsam don snang ba'i hnas gzhan gyi dbang gi ngo bo nyid yin na/ de ji ltar na gzhan gyi dbang yin la/ ci'i phpyir na gzhan gyi dbang zhes gya zhe na/ rang gi bag chags kyi sa bon las skyes pa yin pas de lta bas na rkyen gyi gzhan dbang yin no// skyes nas kya/ng skad dig las lhag par bdag nyid gnas par mi nus par na ghzan gyi dbang zhes gya'o//

See also MS 2:18.

seen earlier, Vasubandhu equates the appearance of the magically created elephant with the dependent nature. This appearance is a mental creation (*vikalpa*) which arises in the spectator's mind. Vasubandhu goes on to assert that the magician's *mantra*, which causes the elephant to appear, corresponds to the storehouse consciousness.[447] Through the utterance of the *mantra*, the illusion of the elephant is created. Similarly, through the reactualization of the *vāsānas* which constitute the storehouse consciousness, the dependent nature manifests as the unreal mental creations which make up our everyday world.

Together, the models of the storehouse consciousness and the three natures serve to explain the relation between human consciousness and the external world as we perceive it. The dependent nature is variously defined as discursive thought (*vikalpa*), conceptualization (*vijñapti*), and unreal mental creation (*asatkalpa* or *abhūtaparikalpa*).[448] All of these terms describe mental events in which an external object seems to be communicated to the perceiver. The dependent nature is thus defined as the basis for the appearance of objects (*arthābhāsāśraya*).[449] The mental events which are equated with the dependent nature arise from the impressions of past deeds (*vāsanās*) which reside in and make up the storehouse consciousness. Together, these mental events constitute the phenomenal world. The objects within this world, i.e., the objects which the mental events apparently communicate to the perceiver, are defined as the

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447 TSN 27-30.
See note 431 for the Sanskrit and translation of these verses.

448 MVbh 1:5.

449 MS 2:2 and 2:15.

imagined nature. Although these objects appear to truly exist, they are non-existent or fictive.[450] The third of the three natures, the perfected nature, is defined as the non-existence of these objects. Vasubandhu succinctly presents these definitions in the following passage:

> Whatever object is discriminated by whatever discrimination, that is the imagined nature, and it does not exist (*na vidyate*). The dependent nature is a discrimination which arises from causal factors. The perfected is the condition of the latter when it is completely separated from the former.[451]

In addition to clarifying the relation between the perceiver and the object which is perceived, the above quotation indicates the close interrelation between the three natures.

Throughout the early Yogācāra writings, the three natures are defined in relation to one another. The close interrelation between the three natures reflects their centrality, as well as their fluidity. The attempt to pin down and precisely define the three natures often proves frustrating since different sources, or even different passages within the same source, seem to define them differently. The apparent contradictions between various treatments of the three natures are not due to a lack of systematic thought, but are inherent

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450 MS 2:2-2:3.

451 Triṃśikā 20-21.
yena yena vikalpena yad yad vastu vikalpyate/ parikalpita evāsau svabhāvo na sa vidyate// paratantrasvabhāvas tu vikalpaḥ pratyayodbhavaḥ/ niṣpannastasya pūrveṇa sadā rahitatā tu yā//

to the very model of the three natures. The definitions are deliberately fluid, for the model of three natures is perspectival, rather than absolute. Seen from one perspective, for example, the dependent nature is the act of construction. Seen from another perspective, it is the constructed objects. The same is true of the imagined nature.

Along these lines, Asaṅga tells us that the three natures should be thought of as being both the same and different from one another. He explains the identity of the three natures from the stance of the dependent nature. The dependent nature, he says, is dependent in one sense, imaginary in another, and perfected in another. It is dependent in that it depends on the resultant seeds of past deeds to arise. It is imaginary in that it is the cause of mental creation (*parikalpa*). And it is perfected in that is absolutely non-existent (*ātyantikābhāva*) in the manner in which it is imagined.[452] The

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[452] MS 2:17.

"Are the three natures different from one another or the same. One must say that they are neither different nor the same. The dependent nature is dependent in one sense, imaginary in another, and perfected in another. In what sense is the dependent nature dependent? In so far as it depends on another thing for arising--the germs of impregnation (*vāsanābīja*). In what sense is it imaginary? In so far as it is the object (*nimitta*) of imagination (*parikalpa*) and it is imagined (*parikalpita*) by the latter. In what sense is it perfected? in so far as it is absolutely non-existent (*ātyantikābhāva*) in the manner in which it is imagined."

ngo bo nyid gsum po 'di dag gi tshul ci tha dad pa zhig gam/ 'on te tha dad pa ma yin zhe na/ tha dad pa ma yin pa/ tha dad pa ma yin pa yang ma yin par brjod par bya'o// gzhan gyi dbang gi ngo bo nyid ni rnam grangs kyis na gzhan gyi dbang ngo// rnam grangs kyis na de nyid kun brtags pa'o/ rnam grangs kyis na de nyid yongs su grub pa'o/
gang gis gzhan gyi dbang gi ngo bo nyid la gzhan gyi dbang zhzes bya ba'i rnam grangs bang zhe na/ gzhan gyi dbang gi bag chags kyi sa bon las 'byung ba'i gzhan gyi dbang gi phyir ro/
gang gis de nyid kun tu brtags pa zhes bya ba'i rnam grangs gang zhe na/ kun tu rtog pa'i rgyu mtshan yin pa dang/ des kun tu brtags pa'i phyir ro/
gang bis de nyid yo/ngs su grub pa zhes bya ba'i rnam grangs gang zhe na/ ji ltar kun tu brtags pa de ltar de gtan med pa'i phyir ro/

dependent natures serves as a bridge between the imagined and perfected natures in that it contains aspects of both of them. Asaṅga illustrates this interrelation with an analogy involving gold ore.[453] Gold ore, he explains, contains three elements: the element of earth (*pṛthivīdhātu*), earth (*pṛthivī*), and gold (*kāñcana*). From the ordinary perspective, the clump of ore appears as clay, since the gold is hidden. When the ore is burned, however, the clay disappears, and the gold becomes visible.

Despite this congruence of the three natures, however, they should not be misunderstood as being entirely the same. Foreseeing this potential misunderstanding, Asaṅga asks, "If in one sense, the dependent nature is identified with the three natures, why are the three natures not identical?" He answers that insofar as the dependent nature is dependent, it is not imaginary, nor is it perfected. Insofar as it is imaginary, it is not dependent, nor is it perfected. And insofar as it is perfected, it is neither dependent nor imaginary.[454]

In the preceding passages, Asaṅga appeals to the dependent nature to show the interrelatedness of the three natures: the dependent nature serves as a bridge between the imagined and perfected natures in that it partakes of both of them, while still allowing for their difference. While this scheme is most commonly used throughout the early Yogācāra writings to show the

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453 MS 2:29. The simile is listed in the Mvy 7650 as *Kāñcana-garbhā-mṛittikā (Sa khong-na gser-yod-pa)*.

454 MS 2:23.

gal te rnam grangs kyis gzhan gyi dbang gi ngo bo nyid ngo bo nyid gsum du zin na/ 'o na ji ltar ngo bo nyid gsum bye brag med par mi 'gyur zhe na/ rnam grangs gang gis gzhan gyi dbang yin pas des kun brtags pa ma yin/ yongs su grub pa [ma] yin no// rnam grangs gang gis kun [tu] brtags pa yin pa des gzhan gyi dbang ma yin/ yongs su grub pa ma yin no// rnam grangs gang gis yongs su grub pa yin pa des gzhan gyi dbang ma yin/ kun brtags pa ma yin no/

interrelation between the three natures, in one instance, Vasubandhu compares the imagined and perfected natures directly, without the dependent nature as mediator. He states,

> It should be known that there is no difference in characteristic between the perfected and the imagined [natures], because the nature [of the latter] is duality which does not exist, and the nature [of the former] is the non-existence of that [duality].
>
> And it should be known that there is no difference in characteristic between the imagined and the perfected, because the nature [of the latter] is non-duality, and the nature [of the former] is the non-existence of duality.[455]

After equating the imagined and perfected natures in the above verses, Vasubandhu goes on to equate the dependent and perfected natures. Throughout this series of verses Vasubandhu points out both the presence and absence of duality in all the three natures, depending upon the perspective from which they are viewed.

The notion of duality, in addition to showing the relation between the three natures, is a basic part of their definition. In the TSN, Vasubandhu defines the imagined nature as duality itself. The dependent nature, he says, is the appearance of that duality: insofar as it appears with duality, the

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455 TSN 18-19.

asaddvayasvabhāvatvāt tadabhāvasvabhāvataḥ/ svabhāvāt kalpitāj jñeyo niṣpanno 'bhinnalakṣaṇaḥ//

advayatvasvabhāvatvād dvayābhāvasvabhāvataḥ niṣpannāt kalpitaś cāiva vijñeyo 'bhinnalakṣaṇaḥ//

Asaṅga explicitly equates the imagined and perfected natures in MS 2:32, but here, the equation is drawn in the context of the dependent nature.

dependent nature is an unreal mental creation (*asatkalpa*). Finally, the perfected nature is the dependent nature stripped of duality. As Asaṅga states, the perfected nature is "the eternal non-existence with duality of the dependent nature."[456] Likewise, Vasubandhu defines the perfected nature as the dependent nature in its state of always being completely separated from the imagined nature [i.e., from duality].[457]

When we compare these definitions with those above, in which Vasubandhu equates the perfected and imagined natures, an apparent contradiction arises. In one case, Vasubandhu defines the perfected nature as equivalent to the imagined nature. In another case, he defines the perfected nature as the absence of the imagined nature. These two definitions appear to be irreconcilable. Furthermore, looking again at the verses in which Vasubandhu equates the perfected and imagined natures, a second problem becomes apparent. Vasubandhu states that the two natures are equal in that the imagined nature is duality which does not exist, and the perfected nature is the non-existence of duality.[458] The equation which he draws here between a non-existent duality and the non-existence of duality

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456 Triṃśikā 21c.

niṣpannastasya pūrvaṇ sadā rahitatātu yā//

457 TSN 3.

tasya khyātur yathākhyānaṃ yā sadāvidyamānatā/ jñeyaḥ sa pariniṣpannaḥ svabhāvo 'nanyathātvataḥ//

Asaṅga also defines the perfected nature as the dependent nature stripped of the imagined nature in MSA 11:16.

458 TSN 18.

"It should be known that the perfected [nature] is not different from the imagined [nature], since the nature [of the former] is the non-existence of duality, and the nature [of the latter] is non-duality."

asaddvayasvabhāvatvāt tadabhāvasvabhāvataḥ/ svabhāvāt kalpitāj jñeyo niṣpanno'bhinnalakṣaṇaḥ//

does not seem to hold in the strictest sense: the latter is an abstract category, while the former is a instantiation of that category.

One explanation to the latter problem is simply that Vasubandhu is enjoying a bit of word play. Although this may be true, it should not obscure the fact that Vasubandhu is also making an important point regarding the apprehension of duality. Non-duality, by definition, excludes duality, but if one truly adopts the stance of non-duality, he can no longer distinguish even between duality and non-duality. To do so would be a self contradiction. It is this reasoning which makes it possible for Vasubandhu to equate the perfected nature with both the imagined nature and the absence of the imagined nature. From the ordinary perspective in which duality pervades, the perfected and imagined natures are not the same. In fact, they are diametrically opposed. In this sense, Vasubandhu defines the perfected nature as the absence of the imagined nature. From the standpoint of non-duality, however, the distinction between the imagined and perfected natures can no longer be made. It is in this sense that Vasubandhu asserts that they are equal.

The distinction between the stances of duality (i.e., the unenlightened perspective), and non-duality (the enlightened perspective) is a basic assumption which underlies the Yogācāra model of three natures. The tacit adherence to such a distinction becomes apparent when we examine a second seeming contradiction in Vasubandhu's definition of the perfected nature as the dependent nature stripped of the imagined nature. This contradiction arises when we consider that Asaṅga and Vasubandhu also equate the dependent and imagined natures. If the dependent and imagined natures are equivalent, it would not seem to make sense to speak of the dependent nature being stripped of the imagined nature, as Vasubandhu

does, for how can the dependent nature be stripped of itself? In order to understand how Vasubandhu can make these two seemingly contradictory definitions, it is necessary to examine closely the notions of equality upon which the definitions of the three natures are based.

According to Western mathematics and logic, the relation of equality carries with it certain properties such as transitivity and commutativity.[459] Most importantly, relations of equality are understood to be objectively true: if two things are said to be equal, it is believed that they remain equal regardless of the perspective from which they are viewed. In the case of the three natures, however, all definitions and equations are understood to be relative rather than absolute. This relativity is based upon the distinction between the enlightened and unenlightened perspectives. How one defines the three natures depends upon whether one is considering them from the enlightened or unenlightened point of view.

From the ordinary perspective, the dependent nature is seen and experienced as the imagined nature. From the enlightened perspective, it is seen and experienced as the perfected nature. In this sense, the imagined and perfected natures are either present or absent in the dependent nature, depending upon one's point of view. This is not to say that the imagined and perfected natures are simply coexistent properties of the dependent nature. As Asaṅga explains, when the dependent nature arises,

> ...if one perceives its [imagined] characteristic, he does not see its [perfected] characteristic. If one perceives its [perfected] characteristic, he does not see its [imagined] characteristic. Likewise, it is

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459 Transitivity: If a=b and b=c, then a=c.
Commutativity: If a=b then b=a.

> said, 'In the dependent, the imagined is absent, but the perfected is present. That is why in this [dependent], the two [i.e., the imagined and the perfected natures] which are seen and not seen, are equivalent.'[460]

To say that the dependent and perfected natures are equivalent is not to say that they are always so. The perfected "should be spoken of as neither exactly different nor non-different from the dependent, just like impermanence, etc., for when one isn't seen the other is."[461] We can thus see how Vasubandhu can equate the dependent and imagined natures while also speaking of the dependent nature being stripped of the imagined nature. From the unenlightened point of view, the dependent nature is experienced as the imagined nature: in this sense, the two natures are equivalent. From the enlightened point of view, on the other hand, the duality which constitutes the imagined nature is no longer perceived. Indeed, the transcendence of duality is itself definitive of enlightenment.

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460 MS 2:32.

gzhan gyi dbang gi ngo bo nyid la kun brtags pa med pa dang/ yongs su grub pa yod pa'i phyir 'byung ste/ de dmigs pa na de mi dmigs pa'i phyir ro// de mi dmigs pa na de dmigs pa'i phyir ro/ gzhan dbang la ni brtags pa med// yongs su grub pa de na yod/ de phyir de la gnyi ga yang// mi dmigs dmigs pa mnyam pa yin/ zhes ji skad bshad pa lta bu'o/

461 TRIM 22.

ata eva sa naivānyo nānyayḥ paratantrataḥ/ anityatādivad vādyo nādṛṣṭe 'smin sa dṛśyate//

V. Conclusion

Modern scholars have contrasted the Madhyamaka's supposedly complete separation of the conventional and ultimate realms with the Yogācāra's purportedly more positive view of the conventional. In this chapter we have seen that, with regard to the two truths, this view does not hold. The early Yogācāra writings are compatible with those of Nāgārjuna in their assertion the transcendence of ultimate truth, their connection of this assertion to an analysis of the problem of verbalization, and their denial of the existence of an inherent connection between name and object. In both the early Yogācāra and Nāgārjuna's writings, it is argued that the fact that an object can be named does not imply the existence of that object.

Furthermore, the early Yogācāra writings concord with Nāgārjuna's thought in their application of the two truths to problems of interpretation of the Buddha's teachings. They appeal to the two truths to resolve apparent contradictions between Mahāyāna teachings and earlier canonical teachings, and in so doing are able to defend the authenticity of the Mahāyāna. More generally, by including all verbalization, including their own writings and the teachings of the Buddha, within the realm of conventional truth, they depict religious teachings not as absolute truths in themselves, but as pointers toward the realization of this truth.

The fact that later Madhyamaka thinkers such as Candrakīrti emphasize the negative aspect of the conventional as that which covers up the ultimate, does not mean that such interpretations of Nāgārjuna are the definitive ones. Nāgārjuna's use of the term *saṃvṛti*, which contains certain inherent semantic ambiguities, leaves open the possibility of both negativistic interpretations along the lines of Candrakīrti, as well as the more positive interpretations of the early Yogācāra writers. This contrast between

more negative and positive views of the conventional applies when we compare the early Yogācāra writings with those of Candrakīrti, but not necessarily when we compare them to the views of Nāgārjuna. Indeed, in terms of their treatment of the two truths, the early Yogācāra writings can be regarded as a continuation of Nāgārjuna's thought, and not a divergent stream.

Chapter 6
The Three Natures in Relation to Nāgārjuna's Thought

I. Introduction

In the previous chapter, I have established that the Yogācāra treatment of the two truths is compatible, and even closely continuous with that of Nāgārjuna. Given this observation, along with fact that the early Yogācāra writers present and systematize the teaching of the three natures while also maintaining the doctrine of two truths, I can tentatively conclude that they held the two models to be compatible. My conclusion at this point can only be tentative, however, for thus far I have limited my investigation to defining the two truths and three natures and to situating them within the Madhyamaka and Yogācāra schools. In order to address fully the question of the compatibility between the two truths and three natures, I need to examine closely the philosophical relation between these models.

This chapter will begin by directly comparing the models of two truths and three natures. Although an evaluation of the compatibility of these two models is important in establishing the relation between early Madhyamaka and Yogācāra thought, one should be wary of using a simple comparison between single doctrines which are taken to represent different schools. To identify a school of thought with any particular doctrine is to overlook the philosophical complexity of that school, and the interconnection between doctrines which exists within any system of thought.[462] It is necessary,

[462] As D.T. Suzuki has pointed out, the tendency to identify a school with a particular doctrine has led to a misunderstanding of the relation between the Madhyamaka and Yogācāra schools. (See above, p. 14 for a quotation from

therefore, to look at the context in which the models are presented, and the scope to which they are meant to apply. This chapter will therefore compare the three natures with the notions of saṃsāra and nirvāṇa, and dependent co-origination and emptiness in Nāgārjuna's thought. Underlying all of these doctrines is the general Buddhist principle of the Middle Path, which treads between the philosophical extremes of reification and over-negation. I will examine the notion of the Middle Path as it is expressed in Yogācāra thought through the simultaneous assertion of both existence and non-existence. Finally, I will examine later Buddhist views regarding the three natures and their relation to Nāgārjuna's thought.

II. The Two Truths and the Three Natures Compared

The most direct way to compare the model of two truths and that of three natures is to seek lines of equivalency between them. The early Yogācāra writers do this in a number of instances. Indeed, they appeal to a correspondence between the two truths and the three natures in order to define the three natures. At the higher level, they equate the perfected nature with the ultimate truth. In his commentary to the MV, for example, Vasubandhu asserts that "the ultimate truth is to be known as the one perfected nature only."[463] At the lower level, the early Yogācāra writers

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Suzuki on this point.)

463 MVbh 3:10c.

paramārthasatyaṃ/ ekasmāt pariniṣpannād eva svabhāvād veditavyaṃ/

In MS 2:26, the *pariniṣpanna* is defined as the four-fold pure dharma (*caturvidha vaiyavadānikadharma*). The first type of purity, essential purity (*prakṛtivyavadhāna*), is defined as *tathatā, śūnyatā, bhūtakoṭi, animitta, paramārtha* and *dharmadhātu*.

The perfected nature and ultimate truth are also brought together in

equate the imagined nature with the conventional truth. Vasubandhu states in his TSN that the imagined nature is conventional reality itself.[464] While a reasonably straightforward equation can be drawn between the imagined nature and the conventional truth, as well as between the perfected nature and ultimate truth, this leaves open the question of how the dependent nature relates to the two truths. The dependent nature can not be directly equated with either the conventional or the ultimate truth, yet it contains aspects of both of them. This fact leads us to a seemingly fundamental difference between the model of two truths and three natures.

Within the three nature model, there exists an interrelation between the different levels which is not present in the model of two truths. As we saw in the previous chapter, Asaṅga and Vasubandhu frequently define the three natures in terms of each other, and assert that they are not entirely different from one another, nor are they entirely the same. Because of this interrelation between each of the three natures, even the extremes can be equated. Thus as we saw, Vasubandhu asserts that the perfected nature and the imagined nature are the same, since the former consists in the non-existence of duality, while the latter consists in that non-existent duality itself.[465]

The model of two truths, unlike that of the three natures, does not allow for an interrelation between its components. Instead, it consists in a

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describing the Buddha: he is said to be *niśpannaparamārtho* (MS 10:27 and MSA 21:60-61).

464 TSN 23. For the Sanskrit and translation of this verse, see above, note 358.

465 TSN 18.
For the Sanskrit and translation of this verse, see above, n. 455.

binary opposition: ultimate truth will always transcend the conventional expressions of it, no matter how high the conventional may reach.[466] This difference between the model of two truths and that of three natures can be explained in part by the simple fact that the latter model contains a middle element, the dependent nature. In the model of three natures, the dependent nature serves as a bridge between imagined and the perfected natures. In the model of two truths, however, the conventional and ultimate truths have no' intermediary between them. Interpreting this difference, some modern scholars have suggested that the early Yogācāra writers deliberately added a middle element in order to connect the conventional and ultimate realms, and thus to avoid the wholesale rejection of conventional reality. In these interpretations, the models of two truths and three natures are taken as representative of the Madhyamaka and Yogācāra schools respectively.

Janice Dean Willis, for example, draws the following comparison between the two truths and the three natures:

> The *parikalpita* nature of Asaṅga's schema is synonymous with the *saṃvṛti satya* of the two-truths theory and the *pariniṣpanna* is the ineffable correlate to *paramārtha satya*. What Asaṅga has done by introducing a third category into the schema is to provide the Buddhist practitioner with *insulation* against nihilism.[467]

Willis is careful to avoid asserting that the two truth model must necessarily

466 Charles Hallisey points out that in Theravādin interpretations, the conventional and ultimate truths are not always considered to be exclusive of one another. See Hallisey (1994).

467 Willis, p. 18.

be interpreted as entirely negativistic. Thus, while she presents the formulation of the model of three natures as a direct response to the model of two truths, she does not indicate that the two models are necessarily opposed to one another.

Other scholars, however take the model of two truths as representative of the Mādhyamikas' complete rejection of conventional reality. Ashok Chatterjee, for example, writes:

> To denounce all phenomena as saṃvṛti is however an extreme position. For a system which is all criticism and has no view about the real, as the Mādhyamika is, there is nothing to pick and choose in phenomena themselves. Since he offers no account of his own for the explanation of phenomena, he is not interested in preferring any particular aspect of it to another. He can therefore relegate the whole of empirical existence under one category, viz., saṃvṛti and condemn it as unreal.[468]

Chatterjee contrasts the supposed negativism of the Madhyamaka school with the Yogācāra stance. The Yogācāra, he says, is a "speculative system" which "professes to give a constructive interpretation of experience." Chatterjee expands on this point, claiming that the Yogācārin "...leads to the Absolute (paramārtha) through a particular approach; he shows that the Real is working within phenomena in a particular way."[469]

According to Chatterjee, because the Yogācārins hold a more positive

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468 Chatterjee (1962) p. 147.

469 Chatterjee (1962) p. 147.

view of conventional reality, the model of two truths is insufficient for them. Their viewpoint requires an additional element which allows them to distinguish between a lower and a higher level within the conventional realm. As Chatterjee puts it:

> The whole of empirical experience is therefore not equally despicable. In phenomena themselves there are two aspects -- the one utterly unreal, and the other real, though infected by the former. Saṃvṛti must be split into two, the subject and the object.... There are thus three, and not merely two, Truths.[470]

Chatterjee thus equates the Yogācārins' perfected nature with Nāgārjuna's ultimate truth, and defines the imagined and dependent natures as two aspects of the conventional truth. The Yogācārins' bifurcation of the conventional truth, according to Chatterjee, constitutes an innovation in Mahāyāna thought, and is representative of the overall difference between the Madhyamaka and Yogācāra schools.

Another modern scholar who takes the Yogācāra addition of a middle level of truth as representative of the difference between the Madhyamaka and Yogācāra schools is Stefan Anacker. Anacker equates Vasubandhu's notion of the perfected nature with Nāgārjuna's notion of ultimate truth. He then adds:

> But whereas Nāgārjuna wishes to demonstrate the inadequacy of all conventional statements (and all statements are, by necessity, conventional),

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470 Chatterjee (1962) pp. 147-148.

> Vasubandhu is interested in showing a path, conceived in conventional terms, which leads to the abandonment of all mental constructions.[471]

Anacker acknowledges that even for Vasubandhu, the path between the conventional and ultimate realms is "self-dissolving," since for Vasubandhu, just as for Nāgārjuna, all constructions are, in the end, empty. Despite this basic similarity, Anacker maintains that there is a difference between the thought of the early Yogācāra writers and that of Nāgārjuna in that the former give a more positive interpretation of conventional reality. Anacker remarks,

> In emphasizing the existence of the construction of that which was not [*abhūtaparikalpa*], Maitreyanātha and Vasubandhu affirm that there is a force in interdependent events which gives rise to constructions and afflictions. Thus there is a reality given to suffering which does not arise with Nāgārjuna's dialectical denials of any existent contrasts or causalities.[472]

Because the two truth model does not fully acknowledge the reality of suffering, Anacker argues, it does not provide a means of working away from that suffering. It was thus for the Yogācārins to provide a model which allows for the construction of a path out of the conventional realm. Willis

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471 Anacker (1984) p. 273, n. 1.

472 Anacker (1984) p. 273, n. 1.

concurs with Anacker regarding the Mādhyamikas' alleged silence on the topic of a religious path. She goes so far as to assert that Asaṅga objected to the two truth theory because it was "insufficient as a soteriological device *(upāya)*."[473]

There are two major problems with the contrasts which Willis, Chatterjee and Anacker draw between the model of two truths and that of three natures. With regard to Chatterjee's account, there is first the problem that, as we discussed in the previous chapter, Nāgārjuna does not entirely reject conventional reality as Chatterjee claims. Indeed, Nāgārjuna's two truths as he presents them in the MMK constitute a defense against charges of being overly negativistic. After presenting six verses in which opponents criticize his teaching of emptiness as negating the everyday world and thus undermining the very basis for Buddhist practice, Nāgārjuna replies that they have entirely misunderstood the concept of emptiness. He states, "We say that you do not comprehend the real purpose of emptiness and its meaning. Therefore, you are harmed by emptiness."[474] In the next verse, Nāgārjuna introduces the two truths, and then uses them to show the dangers of misconstruing emptiness as an absolute expression of reality. Clearly, to categorize the Madhyamaka system as a thoroughgoing negativism is an oversimplification.

There is a second more general problem which is common to the analyses of Chatterjee, Willis and Anacker, as well as a number of other modern scholars. The comparisons which these scholars make between the

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473 Willis, p. 112.

474 MMK 24:7.

atra brūmaḥ śūnyatāyāṃ na tvaṃ vetsi prayojanaṃ/ śūntatāṃ śūnyatārthaṃ ca tata evaṃ vihanyase//

two models do not take into consideration the context in which these models are presented, or the scope to which they refer. The two truth model is presented by Nāgārjuna primarily in reference to the Buddha's teachings: in this context, it is a model for assessing the truth value of statements, and for conveying the limitations of language.[475] Thus the two truths for Nāgārjuna express the relation between the conventional and ultimate realms almost exclusively in terms of verbal discourse --that is to say, in terms of questions such as how name relates to object, how the Buddha could communicate his experience of ultimate reality, and how to interpret the Buddha's teachings. In general, these issues can be classified as epistemological. The early Yogācāra writers concur with Nāgārjuna in terms of the scope to which they apply the model of two truths: they use the two truths predominantly in reference to the Buddha's teachings. In the MS, for example, the only time Asaṅga uses the term *saṃvṛti* is to categorize certain doctrines which are attributed to the Buddha.[476]

Not only does Asaṅga's usage of the term *saṃvṛti* correspond with that of Nāgārjuna, but his stance concerning such fundamental epistemological issues such as the relation between name and object is the same as that presented in Nāgārjuna's writings. In a section of his BBh dealing with the

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475 Recall, for example, Nāgārjuna's most programmatic presentation of the two truths in MMK 24:8-9:

"The teaching of the Dharma by the Buddhas is based upon two truths: the worldly conventional truth and the ultimate truth.
Those who do not understand the distinction between these two kinds of truth do not understand the deepest meaning of the Buddha's doctrine."

dve satye samupāśritya buddhānāṃ dharma deśanā/ lokasaṃvṛtisatyaṃ ca satyaṃ ca paramārthataḥ// ye 'nayor na vijānanti vibhāgaṃ satyayordvayoḥ/ te tattvaṃ na vijānanti gambhīraṃ buddhaśāsane// vyavahāram anāśritya paramārtho na deśyate/ paramārtham anāgamya nirvāṇaṃ nādhigamyate//

476 MS 2:31.

issue of verbal designation, Asaṅga begins with the question, "Now by what philosophical reasoning is the inexpressible character (*nirabhilāpya*) of all dharmas to be understood?"[477] Asaṅga argues that the true nature of dharmas does not exist in the way in which it is expressed. For example, he says, a designation such as "form" which names an individual characteristic of dharmas, is a designation only, and is not the essential nature (*svabhāva*) of that dharma: "there is no dharma identical to the verbal designation such as form."[478] He concludes this section of the BBh with the assertion, "By this means and others consistent with demonstration-and-proof reasoning one will come to judge that the essential nature of all dharmas is inexpressible."[479] This point is certainly in agreement with the writings of Nāgārjuna.[480]

Occasionally, the early Yogācāra writers use the model of three natures as well as that of two truths in reference to problems concerning verbalization. However, this is not the primary focus for their presentation of the three natures. Instead, the early Yogācāra writers use the three natures primarily in reference to different levels of reality: they use them to address the ontological question of how conventional and ultimate *realities* (as

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477 BBh p. 43.
tatra kayā yuktyā nirabhilāpyasvabhāvatā sarvadharmāṇāṃ pratyavagantavyā/

478 BBh pp. 45-49.

479 BBh p. 48.
iyam tāvad upapattisādhanayuktir ānulomikī yayā nirabhilāpyasvabhāvatā sarvadharmāṇāṃ pratyavagantavyā/

480 For a further discussion regarding the relation between name and object in the thought of Nāgārjuna and the early Yogācāra writers, see Chap. 5, Sects. II-III.

opposed to truths) relate to one another. It is important to clarify here the contrast being made between reality and truth. Briefly put, "reality" is taken to mean an actual state of being, and "truth" to mean conformity with that state of being.[481] While conventional and ultimate realities define realms of existence, conventional and ultimate truths define statements about those realms. In comparing the two truths and the three natures, modern scholars have brought together two models whose scopes, while they overlap, are not entirely coextensive. One model talks about *satya*, the other, about *svabhāva*: One model is predominantly epistemological and the other predominantly ontological.

It is important to include the qualifier "predominantly" in the preceding statement, for although the contrasts between truth and reality, and between epistemology and ontology, are important, these distinctions should not be taken as hard and fast, either in the English or in the Sanskrit context. In the discourse of Nāgārjuna and the early Yogācāra writers, the concepts of truth and reality often overlap. Linguistically, the intersection of these two spheres is evident in the Sanskrit term *satya*, which encompasses both the meanings true and real. In certain cases, the usage of *satya* coincides with that of *svabhāva*, and the line blurs between epistemology and ontology.

Thus, in the model of two truths, although the term *saṃvṛtisatya* is equated primarily with everyday concepts and designations (*prapañca*, *pratijñā*), the term *saṃvṛti* can also refer to the external reality in which these designations take place. Indeed the everyday world is constructed

481 In using the term "reality," I do not mean to suggest that either Nāgārjuna or the early Yogācāra writers asserted the existence of a single, absolute reality.

from or even equated with these conventional designations. As Nāgārjuna asserts, the world exists by convention (*saṃvṛtaṃ*):

> You have declared, O savior, that just as [things] arising from causes and conditions are taught as artificial (*kṛtaka*), all that which is conditionally arisen [exists only] by convention.[482]

In the following quotation Nāgārjuna again talks about convention (*saṃvṛti*) in a more ontological context. In this context he makes a direct connection between convention and the principle of dependent origination.

> Convention, which arises from causes and conditions, is dependent. Thus the dependent has been spoken of. The ultimate, however, is uncreated;
>
> It is also called intrinsic-being, nature, essence, substance, truly existent thing, and the true. An imagined thing does not exist but a relative is found [to exist].[483]

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482 Acintyastava 6.

hetupratyayasaṃbhūtā yathaite kṛtakāḥ smṛtāḥ/ tadvat pratyayajaṃ viśvaṃ tvayoktaṃ nātha sāṃvṛtam//

ji ltar rgyu rkyen las byung ba// de dag byas pa can du bzhed/ de bxhin rkyen las byung ba kun// mgon po khyod kyis kun rdzob gsungs/

483 Acintyastava 44-45.

hetupratyayasaṃbhūta paratantrā ca saṃvṛtiḥ/ paratantra iti proktaḥ paramārthas tv akṛtimaḥ// svabhāvaḥ prakṛtis tattvaṃ dravyaṃ vastu sad ity api/ nāsti vai kalpito bhāvo paratantras tu vidyate//

While the attribution of the Catuḥstava to Nāgārjuna is generally accepted, the question of which four hymns comprise this collection has given rise to some controversy. Regarding Nāgārjuna as the author of the Acintyastava, see Prabhu Bhai Patel and Guiseppe Tucci, IHQ 8 (1932) pp. 316-31, 689-705 and IHQ 10 (1934) pp. 82-89. See also Tucci (1956) pp. 235-7.

Despite a certain haziness in the distinction between *satya* and *svabhāva*, there remains a difference in the scope of these two terms, and a general difference between the scopes of the models of two truths and three natures. In recognizing this difference, and addressing its implications, we can more properly compare how Nāgārjuna and the early Yogācāra writers understood the relation between the conventional and ultimate realms.

As we have seen above, Nāgārjuna's presentation of the two truths seems to preclude a connection between the conventional and ultimate realms. This binary opposition, as it is presented by Nāgārjuna, applies specifically to language: because Nāgārjuna insists on the ineffability of the ultimate reality, he can not allow for any connection between ultimate truth and ordinary designation. At first glance Nāgārjuna's stance seems to run counter to the Yogācāra presentation of the three natures, in which the conventional and ultimate realms are connected through the dependent nature. However, as we have seen in the previous chapter, the early Yogācāra writers also regard the ultimate truth as entirely beyond the grasp of conventional words and concepts. Furthermore, at times they even use the three natures to express the ineffability of the ultimate realm. Asaṅga, for example, asserts that the perfected nature transcends the imagined names and the act of imagination. He states that the perfected nature is beyond the range of discursive thought, since it is free of verbalization (*prapañca*).[484]

Thus, in terms of the relation between conventional and ultimate *truths*, specifically, the early Yogācārins' stance is compatible with that of

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484 MSAbh 11:41.
avikalpā ca vikalpāgocaratvāt niṣprapañcatayā/

Nāgārjuna. Keeping with the belief in the ineffability of ultimate truth, the early Yogācārins do not attempt to establish any connection between the conventional and ultimate realms in this context. It is when they are talking about the relation between conventional and ultimate *realities* that the Yogācāra writers appeal to the notion of the dependent nature to show an interconnection between the various levels of being.

III. The Three Natures and Saṃsāra / Nirvāṇa Compared

Given that the model of three natures is primarily ontological in its scope, it makes sense to compare it with elements in Nāgārjuna's thought which also pertain to different levels of reality. Nāgārjuna expresses and analyses the distinction between levels of reality in terms of the relation between saṃsāra and nirvāṇa. In comparing the three natures with saṃsāra and nirvāṇa, we can draw lines of correspondence between the imagined nature and saṃsāra, on the one hand, and the perfected nature and nirvāṇa on the other. The dependent nature, because it encompasses both the imagined and the perfected natures, corresponds simultaneously to both saṃsāra and nirvāṇa. More precisely, saṃsāra and nirvāṇa each constitute an aspect of the dependent nature. As Asaṅga states:

> *Saṃsāra* is the *paratantra-svabhāva* in its aspect of defilement. Nirvāṇa is the same in its aspect of purity. The basis (*āśraya*) is the dependent nature in that it partakes of both aspects at the same time (*tadubhayabhāgapatita*). The revolution at the basis (*āśrayaparāvṛtti*) consists in that which the dependent nature, when its antidote (*pratipakṣa*) arises, gets rid of the defiled aspect and converts it (*pariṇāma*) into its purified aspect

(*vyavadānabhāga*).[485]

Here, Asaṅga expresses the identity of saṃsāra and nirvāṇa through the dual aspect of the dependent nature. On the basis of the dependent nature, the deluded person sees the world in terms of the imagined nature (i.e., he sees *saṃsāra*), while the enlightened being sees it in terms of the perfected nature (*nirvāṇa*). In the end, however, the imagined and the perfected natures are the same, for they are both equated with the dependent nature.

The assertion of the identity of *saṃsāra* and *nirvāṇa* is certainly not new to the Yogācāra; in fact it is a hallmark of Nāgārjuna's thought. In a frequently quoted passage of his MMK, Nāgārjuna proclaims,

> There exists no distinction between saṃsāra and nirvāṇa. There exists no distinction between nirvāṇa and saṃsāra. Between the extreme limit of nirvāṇa and the extreme limit of saṃsāra, not even something subtle is found. [486]

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485 MS 2:28.

'di ltar gzan gyi dbang gi ngo bo nyid de nyid kun tu brtags pa'i chas ni 'khor ba'o// yongs su grub pa'i chas ni mya ngan las 'das pa'o// de la 'khor ba ni gzan gyi dbang gi ngo bo nyid de kun nas nyon mongs pa'i char gtogs pa'o/ mya ngan [las] 'das pa ni de nyid rnam par byang ba'i char gtogs pa'o/ gnas ni de nyid gnyi ga'i char gtogs pa ste/ gzan gyi dbang gi ngo bo nyid do/ gzan gyur pa ni gang gzan gyi dbang gi ngo bo nyid de nyid kyi gnyen po skyes na gang kun nas nyon mongs pa'i cha ldog cing rnam par byang ba'i char gyur pa'o/

486 MMK 25:19-20.

na saṃsārasya nirvāṇāt kiṃcid asti viśeṣaṇam/ na nirvāṇasya saṃsārāt kiṃcid asti viśeṣaṇam// nirvāṇasya ca yā koṭiḥ saṃsārasya ca/ na tayor antaraṃ kiṃcit susūkṣmam api vidyate//

The relation which Nāgārjuna depicts between the conventional and ultimate realms in this passage, where he is talking about saṃsāra and nirvāṇa, is quite different from the relation he depicts when he is discussing *saṃvṛti* and *paramārtha satya*s. Although Nāgārjuna presents the conventional and ultimate *truths* as entirely disparate, we can see that this is not the case in his treatment of the conventional and ultimate realms of experience. Indeed, he equates the everyday world with the state of liberation, just as the Yogācāra writers equate the imagined and perfected natures.

For both Nāgārjuna and the early Yogācāra writers, the question of how conventional reality (the world of ordinary beings) relates to ultimate reality (the world of enlightened beings) is of crucial significance in establishing the viability of, as well as the need for religious practice. If conventional and ultimate realities were entirely discontinuous, there would be no possibility of an effective religious path --it would be impossible to work one's way from the conventional realm of suffering to the ultimate realm of release. On the other hand, we cannot say that the ultimate and conventional realities are entirely the same, for this would obviate the need for religious practice --if the conventional realm were the same as the ultimate, there would be no way to account for the delusion and suffering which we know to exist in our everyday world: All beings would already be enlightened. As the MV states, for example, emptiness must be beset with afflictions, otherwise all beings would automatically be liberated, and religious exertion would be fruitless.[487] We therefore need to assert

487 MV 1:21.

"If it were not afflicted, then all beings would be liberated. If it were pure, then all effort would be fruitless."

saṃkliṣṭā ced bhaven nāsau muktāḥ syuḥ sarvadehinaḥ/ viśuddhā ced

simultaneously that the conventional and the ultimate realms are different and the same. Asaṅga and Vasubandhu's model of three natures provides a solution to this apparent paradox.

The model of three natures draws a clear distinction between the conventional and the ultimate realms: the imagined nature constitutes the conventional realm of duality and illusory existence, and the perfected nature constitutes the ultimate realm of non-duality and emptiness. The model also allows for a continuity between the conventional and ultimate realms. Because the dependent nature partakes of both the imagined and perfected natures, it can serve as a bridge between them. Stated in more dynamic terms, from the axial stance of the dependent nature, one can either move downward from the realm of the ultimate in order to engage in the world, or one can move upward from the ordinary world along a path toward spiritual perfection. This explains how a Buddha, once he is enlightened, can preach the Dharma in the conventional realm. It also explains how an ordinary person can pass from the conventional realm into the ultimate. This movement centered upon the dependent nature is termed "revolving at the basis" (*āśrayaparāvṛtti*) and is central to the Yogācāra understanding of the path toward enlightenment.

As we have seen, the discontinuity between the conventional and ultimate realms exists in Nāgārjuna's thought with reference to levels of *truth*. This is not to say, however, that Nāgārjuna viewed ultimate *reality* as entirely transcendent. Nāgārjuna displays an awareness, just as the early Yogācāra writers did, of the need to establish a continuity between the ultimate and conventional realms of being. In Nāgārjuna's statements

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bhaven nāsau vyāyāmo niṣphalo bhavet//

See also Vasubandhu's commentary immediately following this verse.

concerning *saṃsāra* and *nirvāṇa*, as well as in the model of three natures, we begin to see a resolution to the apparent paradox entailed in establishing both an identity and a difference between the conventional and ultimate realms of being. For a further explanation as to how this paradox is resolved, I turn to a comparison between the three natures and Nāgārjuna's teachings of dependent co-origination and emptiness.

IV. The Three Natures Compared With the Equation of Dependent Co-Origination and Emptiness

In the model of three natures, the dynamic between the conventional and ultimate realms of existence is established on the basis of the dependent nature. The dependent nature is presented in early Yogācāra thought as an alternative formulation of the doctrine of dependent co-arising (*pratītyasamutpāda*). In the SN, for example, the dependent nature is defined simply as the dependent origination of phenomena.[488] Likewise, the TSN states that the dependent nature is so-called because it develops subject to conditions (*pratyayādhīnavṛtti*). Just as Nāgārjuna does with the doctrine of *pratītyasamutpāda*, the early Yogācāra writers develop the notion *paratantra* in direct opposition to the notion of *svatantra*, which means self-dependent, or independent, and hence absolute. The MS, for example, explains that the dependent nature is dependent in two ways: because it is

488 SN p. 81.

In his Viniścayasaṃgrahaṇī, Asaṅga states "How should one thoroughly know the dependent nature? He said: One should thoroughly know that it includes all constructed things [*byaba 'dus byas*}. By 'compounded' is meant produced through conditions or come together owing to causes and conditions" (VS 27b:7, as translated by Willis, p. 108).

arisen from the resultant seeds of past actions, and because it can not subsist on its own after arising.[489] The dependent nature's lack of intrinsic being, in turn, is defined as the perfected nature. In this sense, the dependent and perfected natures are equated.

The equation which the early Yogācāra writers draw between the dependent and perfected natures closely parallels the equation of dependent co-origination and emptiness in Nāgārjuna's thought. While the dependent nature corresponds to the doctrine of dependent origination, the perfected nature corresponds with the notion of emptiness.[490] More importantly, the relation between the dependent and perfected natures in early Yogācāra thought, and between dependent co-origination and emptiness in Nāgārjuna's thought, is the same. Just as the dependent and perfected natures are flip sides of the same reality, so too are dependent co-origination and emptiness. In numerous places throughout his writings, Nāgārjuna asserts the identity of dependent co-origination and emptiness. Perhaps the most famous example is the following passage from the MMK:

> That which originates dependently, we call emptiness. It is a designation based upon some

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489 MS 2:15.

gal te rnam par rig pa tsam don snang ba'i gnas gzhan gyi dbang gi ngo bo nyid yin na/ de ji ltar na gzhan gyi dbang yin la/ ci'i phyir na ghan gyi dbang zhes bya zhe na/ rang gi bag dhags kyi s a bon las skyes pa yin pas de lta bas na ryen gyi gnyzhan dbang yin no // skyes nas kyang skad cig las lhag par bdag nyid gnas par mi nus pas na gzhan gyi dban zhes bya'o/

The Trimśikā defines the dependent nature as *utpatti-niḥsvabhāva* (lacking intrinsic being because of being arisen), and as "being controlled by causes and conditions outside of oneself." TRIM 4 and 21a.

490 For instances in which the early Yogācāra writers equate the perfected nature with emptiness, see MV 3:7 and MS 2:26.

material. This is the Middle Path.[491]

Similarly, Nāgārjuna asserts in his VV:

> The dependent nature of things is called emptiness, because the dependent nature is what it is to have no intrinsic nature.[492]

And in the final line of the same text, he states:

> I bow down before the incomparable Buddha who taught that emptiness, dependent origination and the Middle Path are of the same meaning.[493]

In many interpretations of Nāgārjuna's thought, the equation of emptiness and dependent co-origination has been interpreted in terms of

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491 MMK 24:18.
yaḥ pratītyasamutpādaḥ śūnyatāṃ tāṃ pracakṣmahe/ sā prajñaptir upādāya pratipat saiva madhyamā//

492 VV 22.
yaśca pratītyabhāvo bhāvānāṃ śūnyateti sā proktā / yaśca pratītyabhāvo bhavati hi tasyāsvabhāvatvam/
I follow Bhattacharya in his translation of this passage, taking the genitive plural "*bhāvānāṃ*" ("things") to go with "*pratitītyabhāvo,*" and not with *śūnyātā.*

493 VVbh 70.
yaḥ śūnyatāṃ pratītyasamutpādaṃ madhyamāṃ pratipadaṃ ca/ ekārthāṃ nijagāda praṇamāmi tamapratimabuddham//
See also Lokātītastava 22 and Acintyastava 40.

emptiness negating the everyday world. However, this is only half of the picture, for the equation between dependent co-origination and emptiness runs the other way as well. That is to say, the world is possible precisely *because* it is empty. As Nāgārjuna asserts:

> Any dharma which is not dependently originated cannot exist. Therefore, any dharma which is not empty cannot exist.[494]

Immediately following this verse, Nāgārjuna goes on to argue that the very basis of the Buddhist tradition, the Four Noble Truths and the Three Jewels, could not come into being unless everything were empty. He presents a similar argument in his VV, asserting,

> All things are possible for him for whom emptiness is possible. Nothing is possible for him for whom emptiness is not possible.[495]

Nāgārjuna substantiates this assertion with an exhaustive inventory of what becomes possible through emptiness. The list begins with dependent origination. Following that, proceed the results of monastic life, the special acquisitions, the Four Noble Truths, the Three Jewels, merit, the cause of

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494 MMK 24:19.

apratītyasamutpanno dharmaḥ kaścin na vidyate/ yasmāt tasmād aśūnyo hi dharmaḥ kaścin na vidyate//

495 VV 70.

prabhavati ca śūnyateyaṃ yasya prabhavanti tasya sarvārthāḥ/ prabhavati na tasya kiṃcinna prabhavati śūnyatā yasya/

merit, the result of merit, and so on, including, finally, all worldly conventions.

Nāgārjuna argues that if there were no dependent co-origination, there would be no Dharma, for the Buddha taught that he who sees dependent co-origination sees the Dharma. Also, if one rejects dependent co-origination, he rejects the Four Noble Truths, because dependent co-origination is the origination of sorrow, which is the First Noble Truth.

The specificity and comprehensiveness of Nāgārjuna's inventory serve to emphasize the necessary connection between the ordinary realm of being and the ultimate realm of emptiness. Dependent origination, the first item of Nāgārjuna's list of things which become possible through emptiness, is the bridge between these two realms. It is equated with both the conventional realm of being and the ultimate realm of emptiness. It is thus through dependent origination that we can see that both extremes are, in the end, the same. This is the same dynamic relation articulated in the Yogācāra writings between the dependent and the perfected natures. From an unenlightened standpoint, the ordinary deluded person mistakenly perceives the dependently originated objects which arise in the everyday world as being independent and truly existent. At the same time, the enlightened being sees these very same objects as empty. Both the unenlightened and the enlightened beings take part in the same world, yet the former experiences the world in terms of conventional reality, while the latter experiences it in terms of ultimate reality.

The equation of dependent co-origination and emptiness in Nāgārjuna's thought, and the equation of the dependent and perfected natures in Yogācāra thought, explain how the conventional realm can come into being, even though it does not exist in the way which ordinary people

perceive it. In addition to allowing for the manifestation of the conventional realm out of the ultimate, these equations allow for a path out of the conventional and up to the ultimate. If objects in the conventional realm were endowed with intrinsic being (i.e., if they were not empty), they would be static. Since change would be impossible, one would be stuck in the conventional realm eternally. However, since the objects in the conventional realm are empty and hence dependently originated, change is possible, and one can work one's way toward liberation. As Nāgārjuna asserts in his VV, religious practice (*brahmacarya*) is possible *because* things are dependently arisen.[496]

V. Existence and Non-existence in Early Yogācāra Thought.

The early Yogācāra stance regarding the relation between the conventional and ultimate realms is characterized by the assertion, simultaneously, of both their existence and non-existence. This apparent ontological paradox is expressed vividly in early Yogācāra writings through the use of analogies involving illusion.[497] As the MV states, "an object's

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496 VV 54.

atha na pratītya kiṃcitsvabhāva utpadyate sa duśalānām/ dharmāṇāmevaṃ syādvāso na brahmacaryasya//

See also the commentary to this verse, as well as VV 70 and its commentary.

497 For a discussion of Vasubandhu's magic analogy in the TSN, and a suggestion for a modern analogy for the three natures, see Stephen Kaplan's "A Holographic Alternative to a Traditional Yogācāra Simile: An Analysis of Vasubandhu's Trisvabhāva Doctrine." EB 23:1 (1990) 56-78. And Kaplan's "*Paratantra* and *Parikalpita* as Epistemological Concepts in Yogācāra Buddhism and Holographic Psychology," in Nathan Katz, ed. Buddhist and Western Psychology. Boulder: Prajna Press, 1983, pp. 211-215.

existence and non-existence is like that of a magical creation."[498] Asaṅga and Vasubandhu frequently use the analogy of a magically created elephant in order to teach the existence and non-existence of the three natures. In the TSN, Vasubandhu's presentation of the analogy comes after a sequence of verses in which each of the three natures is said to exist and not exist. The magic analogy is introduced as a clarification of this point.

In this analogy, the imagined nature, which corresponds to the elephant, is the illusory appearance of a non-existent thing. The dependent nature, which corresponds to the form of the elephant, is the representation or cognition of an object in the spectator's mind. It exists (i.e., the audience does perceive an elephant), but not in the way in which it is perceived (i.e., as a truly existent elephant). It is a mental creation (*vikalpa*) which does not relate to a real external object. Finally, the perfected nature, which corresponds to the elephant's non-existence, is the non-existence of the duality of a perceiving subject and a perceived object.[499]

Vasubandhu spells out this analogy, showing how the existence and non-existence of the illusion correspond to the existence and non-existence of objects in the everyday world:

> ...in the same way, an object does not exist as it appears, in the state of having object apprehended and subject apprehendor, yet it doesn't not exist, because the illusion itself exists. [500]

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498 MV V:17a.
māyādivad asatvaṃ ca satvaṃ cārthasya tan mataṃ/

499 The analogy of the magically-created elephant appears in MSA 11:15-29, TSN 26-30 and MV 5:17b.

500 MVbh V:17.

In his MSA, Asaṅga explains the same analogy as follows:

> Just as in this there is no existence of that (i.e., in the effect of illusion, there is no existence of elephants, etc.), it is seen that in the dependent nature there is no existence of the imagined nature, which is characterized by duality. Just as there is apprehension of the effect of illusion as the existence of elephants, etc., there is apprehension of the imagination of the unreal in terms of conventional truth.[501]

This use of analogy to assert simultaneously both existence and non-existence is characteristic of the early Yogācāra treatment of ontological questions.

While the analogies clearly state that the magical elephants (and objects as we ordinarily perceive them) are illusory, they also recognize that they do appear. Even from the enlightened point of view, the appearance of the elephant is not denied: Vasubandhu tells us, for example, that the magician, who is comparable to the Buddha, also sees the elephant.[502] The difference between the enlightened and unenlightened perspectives lies not

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evam artho 'pi na cāsti yathā saṃprakhyāti grāhygrāhakatvena na ca naivāsti tadbhrāntimātrāstitvāt.

501 MSAbh 11:16.
yathā tasmin na tadbhāvo māyākṛte hastitvādyabhāvas tathā tasmin paratantre paramārtha iṣyate parikalpitasya dvayalakṣaṇasyābhāvaḥ/ yathā tasya māyākṛtasya hastyādibhāvenopalabdhis tathābhūtaparikalpasya saṃvṛtisatyatopalabdhiḥ.

502 Although Nagao ascribes this comparison to Vasubandhu (1991, p. 71), I have not been able to find it in the primary literature of early Yogācāra.

in whether or not the illusion is perceived, therefore, but in how it is perceived. In seeing the elephant, the magician understands that it is illusory, and thus has no attachment or emotional reaction to it. As Asaṅga explains in reference to the magic analogy, "When people are no longer in error regarding the cause [of illusion], they can interact freely. In the same way, the ascetic, upon transformation, is no longer deluded and acts freely."[503] As we can see from the above passages, the acknowledgment of multiple perspectives is crucial in understanding the early Yogācāra stance regarding the existence of the phenomenal world. To simply interpret the three natures as asserting existence is to focus upon one perspective exclusively, and to neglect half of what the early Yogācāra writers are saying.

In numerous cases, the early Yogācāra writers clearly assert that the three natures should be regarded as empty. In his commentary to the MV, for example, Vasubandhu explains that the imagined nature is empty in that it does not exist, the dependent nature is empty in that it does not exist independently, and the perfected nature is emptiness itself.[504] The model of

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503 MSA 11:18.

tannamitte yathā loko hyabhrāntaḥ kāmataś caret/ parāvṛttāvaparyastaḥ kāmacārī tathā patiḥ// I agree with Lévi, and read *yatiḥ* instead of *patiḥ*

504 MVbh 3:7a.

See also the statement in MVbh 3:8a : "Emptiness is three-fold: emptiness of non-existence, emptiness of being not that and emptiness of own-being."

See also AS p. 65: "There are three types of emptiness: the emptiness of non-existence (*abhāvaśūnyatā*),* the emptiness of such and such an existence, and natural (primordial) emptiness (*prakṛtiśūnyatā*). The first should be understood as imaginary (*parikalpita*), the second as relative (*paratantra*) and the third as absolute (*parinispanna*)."

* The manuscript restored by Pradhan reads *svabhāvaśūnyatā*. Rahula thinks this is a scribal error.

three natures thus can be regarded as an analysis of emptiness into three parts: *abhāvaśūnyatā* (emptiness as non-being), *tathā-bhāva-* or *tahtā-abhāva-śūnyatā* (emptiness as thus being, or as not-thus being), and *prakṛti-śūnyatā* (primordial emptiness).[505] These three types of emptiness correspond, respectively to the imagined, the dependent and the perfected natures. Vasubandhu further explains the three aspects of emptiness as follows:

> The emptiness of non-existence is the imagined nature, because it does not exist in terms of its intrinsic identity. The emptiness of such existence is the dependent nature, because it does not exist in the way it is imagined, but it does exist in terms of its intrinsic identity. And natural emptiness is the perfected nature, because its emptiness is its intrinsic nature.[506]

These passages clearly assert that none of the three natures is exclusively existent or non-existent. They are both existent and non-existent, depending upon the perspective from which they are being viewed. As Vasubandhu states in his TSN, the three levels of reality have the characteristics of both intrinsic being (*svabhāva*) and non-being (*abhāva*).[507]

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505 MSA 14:34 and MV 3:3, 3:7.

506 MSAbh 14:34.
abhāvaśūnyatā parikalpitaḥ svabhāvaḥ svena lakṣaṇenābhāvāt/ tathābhāvasya śūnyatā paratantrasya sa hi na tathābhāvo yathā kalpyate svena lakṣaṇena bhāvaḥ/ prakṛtiśūnyatā pariniṣpannaḥ svabhāvaḥ śūnyatāsvabhāvatvāt/

507 TSN 23-25. See also TSN 10-13, MV 3:3.

Along these lines, it is crucial to recognize that the Yogācāra model of three *svabhāvas* runs alongside the complementary model of three non-own-beings, or three types of lack-of-intrinsic-nature (the *triniḥsvabhāva*). In Chapter Four, we examined the three types of lack-of-intrinsic-nature in the context of the SN's presentation of the model of the three turnings of the wheel of dharma. In the SN, the chapter in which the three *niḥsvabhāvas* are presented immediately follows a chapter devoted to the topic of the three *svabhāvas*. The models of three natures and three types of lack-of-intrinsic-nature are necessary complements to each other. To fully understand one, the other must be understood as well.

In the SN, the Buddha is made to express in some detail the relation between these two models. He explains that the *parikalpita-niḥsvabhāva* is the lack-of-intrinsic-nature in terms of the characteristics which constitute the *parikalpita-svabhāva.* That is to say, the *parikalpita-svabhāva* is the nature which is posited as names and symbols, and the *parikalpita-niḥsvabhāva* is the lack of these names and symbols. The *paratantra-niḥsvabhāva* is the lack-of-intrinsic-nature in terms of being arisen: The *paratantra-svabhāva* consists in an object's arising from other conditions, and the *paratantra-niḥsvabhāva* that object's lack-of-intrinsic-nature because of having been arisen. Finally, the *parinispanna-niḥsvabhāva* is the ultimate lack-of-intrinsic-nature. The SN presents the Buddha as elaborating on this point as follows:

> What is the ultimate lack-of-intrinsic-nature of phenomena? Phenomena that are dependently originated, and which lack an intrinsic nature due to the lack-of-intrinsic-nature in being arisen, also lack intrinsic nature due to an ultimate lack-of-intrinsic-nature. Why is this?

> Paramārthasamudgata, I teach that whatever is an object of purification within phenomena is the ultimate. Since the dependent nature is not an object of purification, it is an 'ultimate lack-of-intrinsic-nature.'[508]

Although at times the three natures may appear to constitute ontologically existent entities, the above passages clearly reveal that such a position is an oversimplification of the early Yogācāra stance.

The back and forth between assertion and negation in early Yogācāra discourse is presented as an explicit attempt to map out a Middle Path which leads between ontological extremes. In addition to shaping their accounts of the three natures, this dynamic is a defining characteristic of early Yogācāra accounts of emptiness. In an extended passage of his BBh, for example, Asaṅga explains emptiness in terms of both existence and non-existence. He begins by denouncing an overly negativistic interpretation of emptiness.

> Moreover, how is emptiness wrongly grasped? A certain *śramaṇa* or *brāhamaṇa*, does not agree (*necchati*) concerning "owing to what there is emptiness." Nor does he agree concerning "that which is empty." But such a formulation as this is evidence of what is said to be "emptiness

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508 SN pp. 99-101.

don dam yang dag 'phags chos rnams kyi don dam pa ngo bo nyid med pa nyid gang zhe na/ rten cing 'brel par 'byung ba'i chos gang dag skye ba ngo bo nyid med pa nyid kyis ngo bo nyid med pa de dag ni don dam pa'i ngo bo nyid med pa nyid kyis ngo bo nyid med pa 'ang yin no// de ci'i phyir zhe na/ don dam yang dag 'phags chos rnams la rnam par dag pah'i dmigs pa gang yin pa de ni ngas don dam pa yin par yongs su bstan la/ gzhan gyi dbang gi mtshan nyid de ni rnam par dag pa'i dmigs pa ma yin pas de'i phyir don dam pa'i ngo by nyid med pa nyid ces bya'o

wrongly conceptualized." And why? Emptiness is logical when one thing is empty of another because of that [other's] absence and because of the presence of the empty thing itself. But how and for what reason would emptiness come to be from universal absence [*sarva-abhāvāt*] Hence, the conception of emptiness these describe is not valid. And therefore, in this manner emptiness is wrongly conceptualized.[509]

Asaṅga's presentation of "emptiness wrongly conceived" revolves around the juxtaposition between "owing to what there is emptiness" (*yena śūnyam*) and "that which is empty" (*yac chūnyam*). According to Asaṅga, while the former (i.e., the object or quality of which something is empty) is said to be absent, the presence of the latter (i.e., the thing which lacks a certain object or quality) can not be denied. Asaṅga argues that the assertion that something is empty makes sense only if we are to acknowledge the presence of that empty thing. He explains this in his account of how emptiness should be properly conceived:

Now how is emptiness rightly conceptualized? Wherever and in whatever place something is not, one rightly observes that [place] to be void of that [thing]. Moreover whatever remains in that place one knows as it really is that 'here there is an existent.' This is said to be engagement with emptiness as it really is and

509 BBh p. 47.

kathaṃ punar durgṛhītā bhavati śūnyatā/ yaḥ kaścic chramaṇo vā brāhmaṇo vā tac ca necchati yena śūnyaṃ/ tad api necchati yat śūnyaṃ/ iyaṃ evaṃ rupā durgṛhītā śūnyatety ucyate/ tat kasya hetoḥ/ yena hi śūnyaṃ/ tad asadbhāvāt/ yac ca śūnyaṃ/ tad sadbhāvāc chūnyatā yujyate/ sarvā bhāvāc ca kutra kiṃ kena śūnyaṃ bhaviṣyati/ na ca tena tasyaiva śūnyatā yujyate/ tasmād evaṃ durgṛhītā śūnyatā bhavati//

without waywardness.[510]

To say that something is empty, Asaṅga argues, is not to say that it does not exist. "Empty" is not simply a term of negation, but is an adjective which requires a further modifier: when one describes an object as empty, he needs to either explicitly or implicitly say what that object is empty of.

For both Nāgārjuna and the early Yogācāra thinkers, the concept of emptiness is understood in direct opposition to the notion of intrinsic being (*svabhāva*). Their descriptions of something as empty, therefore, contain the implicit modifier "of intrinsic being:" the assertion that an object is empty is synonymous with the refutation of its intrinsic being.[511] Closely associated with the concept of *svabhāva* is that of *svalakṣaṇa* (intrinsic characteristic). To say that an object has *svabhāva* is to say that it has certain intrinsic characteristics which are invariably connected with it. If an object were to lose these intrinsic characteristics, or to gain others, that object would cease to be what it is. Objects with intrinsic being, and hence intrinsic characteristics, are therefore necessarily unchanging. This means that they can neither arise, develop, nor expire.

In Nāgārjuna's writings, this line of reasoning is used to prove that all

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510 BBh p. 47.
kathaṃ ca punaḥ sugṛhitā śūnyatā bhavati/ yataś ca yad yatra na bhavati/ tat tena śūnyam iti samanupaśyati/ yat punar atrāvaśiṣṭaṃ bhavati/ tat sad ihāstīti yathābhūtaṃ prajānāti/ iyam ucyate śūnyatāvakrāntir yathābhūta aviparītā/

511 At times emptiness also is defined in terms of the lack of *bhāva* or *vastu*, but in these situations, it is implicitly accepted that the term *svabhāva* is meant. For a discussion of this point, see Peter Fenner in his The Ontology of the Middle Way. Boston: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1990, p. 43.

objects must be devoid of intrinsic being. In his MMK, for example, Nāgārjuna reasons:

> The arising of intrinsic nature through causes and conditions is not reasonable. For, an intrinsic nature having causes and conditions would be fabricated.
>
> How is it possible for intrinsic nature to have the character of being fabricated? For, indeed, intrinsic nature means unfabricated and not dependent upon something else.[512]

An object with intrinsic being is necessarily permanent, and to allow for such an object would be to contradict the Buddha's teaching of universal flux. On the other hand, as Asaṅga points out, to say something is empty of intrinsic being is not necessarily to deny its existence altogether. In asserting that something is empty, one is simply denying that it is an uncaused, unchanging and permanent entity.

It is the distinction between these two types of denial --one which rejects existence and the other which rejects intrinsic being-- that Asaṅga is concerned with in the above passage from the BBh. Asaṅga spells out this distinction throughout his writings. In the AS, for example, he defines emptiness as the non-existence of a certain thing in a certain place, and the existence of another thing in that place. Non-existence, he states, is "the non-existence, in the aggregates, the elements and the spheres, of a self or something pertaining to a self with a permanent, durable, eternal and

512 MMK 15:1-2.
na saṃbhavaḥ svabhāvasya yuktaḥ pratyayahetubhiḥ/ hetupratyayasaṃbhūtaḥ svabhāvaḥ kṛtako bhavet// svabhāvaḥ kṛtako nāma bhaviṣyati punaḥ kathaṃ/ akṛtrimaḥ svabhāvo hi nirapekṣaḥ ca//

immutable nature." Existence, he states, is "the fact that there is no self in them. It is the non-existence of self and the existence of no-self."[513]

Similarly, Vasubandhu, in his commentary to the MV, asserts:

> Thus the characteristic of emptiness has been shown in an unperverted way as stated: When something does not exist in another thing, it is perceived as it really is that it (i.e., the latter) is empty with regard to it (i.e., the former). Furthermore it is understood as it really is that, when, in this place, something remains, it exists here as a real existent.[514]

Vasubandhu's commentary introduces the following verse of the MV, which states concisely the relation between emptiness and existence:

> Therefore, everything is taught as neither empty
> nor non-empty because of existence, non-existence

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513 AS p. 65.

This passage does not exist in the original Sanskrit. The Tibetan translation reads as follows: *gang la gang med pa de ni des stong par yang dag par rjes su mthong ba ste/ 'di la lhag ma gang yin pa de ni 'dir yod pa'o// zhes yang dag pa hi lta ba bzhin du rab tu shes so// 'di ni stong pa nyid la ;jug pa yang dag pa gi lta ba ste/ phyin ci ma log pa zhes bya'o/*

514 MVbh 1:1.

evaṃ yad yatra nāsti tat tena śūnyaṃ iti yathābhūtaṃ samanupaśyati yat punar atrāvaśiṣṭaṃ bhavati tat sad ihāstīti yathābhūtaṃ prajñānātīty aviparītaṃ śūnyatālakṣaṇam udbhāvitam bhavati/

This passage bears a very close resemblance to a passage in the Cūlasuññata-sutta, where the Buddha, explaining emptiness to Ānanda states, "It is perceived that when something does not exist there, the latter [the place] is empty with regard to the former. Further it is comprehended that something that remains there does exist as a real existent." (Majjhima Nikāya, sutta no. 121. trans. I.B. Horner, Middle Length Sayings, vol. 3, pp. 147 ff. For a further comparison of these two passages, see Nagao (1991) Chap. 5.

and existence. This is the Middle Path.[515]

Vasubandhu explains the use of the terms "existence" and "non-existence" as follows: "existence" means the existence of unreal mental construction (*abhūtaparikalpa*), "non-existence" means the non-existence of duality, and "existence" (the second time it is used) means the existence of emptiness in the unreal mental construction. The bimodal existential nature of emptiness is also expressed in the MV in terms of the illusory distinction between a perceiving subject and a perceived object. The MV states "Truly, the characteristic of emptiness is the non-existence of the duality [of subject and object], and the existence of [that] non-existence."[516]

In all the above passages from the BBh, the AS and the MV, the early Yogācāra writers assert their formulation of a Middle Path which treads between the extremes of reification and nihilism. As Asaṅga declares, the true nature of things is to be found "by avoiding grasping both the view which affirms the existence of what is non-existent and the view which denies existence altogether."[517] In particular, the above passages attack the extreme position of universal non-existence (*sarva-abhāvātā*). In his BBh, Asaṅga objects to universal denial not only on philosophical grounds, but

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515 MV 1:2.
na śūnyaṃ nāpi cāśūnyaṃ tasmāt sarvam vidhīyate/ satvād asatvāt satvāc ca madhymā pratipac ca sā//

516 MV 1:13a.
dvayābhāvo hy abhāvasya bhāvaḥ śūnyasya lakṣaṇam/

517 BBh p. 44.
asadbhūtasamāropāsaṃgrāhavivarjito bhūtāpavādāsaṃgrāhavivarjitaś ca vidyate.

more importantly, on the grounds that it is spiritually harmful. He warns:

> One should understand that the denial of both reality and designation is the position of the chief nihilist (*prachāna nāstika*). Because his views are like this the nihilist is not to be spoken with and not to be associated with by those intelligent ones who live the pure life. Such a one as the nihilist brings disaster even unto himself and worldly ones who follow his view also fall into misfortune.[518]

Asaṅga goes so far as to say that it is less harmful to hold onto the view of a self than to deny everything, for in denying all knowables the nihilist destroys the moral principles and thus undermines the basis of Buddhist practice.

In his BBh, Asaṅga presents his understanding of the Middle Path as follows:

> It should be understood that these two views have fallen away from our Dharma-Vinaya: the one which clings to affirming (*samāropa*) the existence of what are non-existent individual characteristics... and the one which with respect to a given thing (*vastu*) denies (*apavadamāno*) the foundation for the sign of verbal designation....[519]

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518 BBh p. 46.

prajñaptitattvāpavādāc ca pradhāno nāstiko veditavyaḥ/ sa evaṃ nāstikaḥ sann akathyo bhavaty asaṃvāsyo vijñānāṃ sabrahmacāriṇām/ sa ātmānam api visaṃpādayati/ loko 'pi yo 'sya dṛṣṭyanumata āpādyate.

(As translated by Willis, pp. 161-162.)

519 BBh p. 45. The passage, in full, is as follows:

dvāvimāvasmād dharmavinayāt praṇaṣṭau veditavyau/ yaś ca rūpādīnāṃ dharmāṇāṃ rupādikasya vastunaḥ prajñaptivādasvabhāvaṃ svalakṣaṇaṃ asadbhūtasamāropato 'bhiniviśate/ yaś cāpi prajñaptivādanimittādhiṣṭhānaṃ

In his exegesis of this passage, Asaṅga equates verbal designation with the imagined nature. He states, "One should thoroughly know the imagined nature as being merely name, to wit, merely imagination."[520] Asaṅga then equates the *vastu*, or thing which remains, with the dependent nature. In this way Asaṅga uses the model of three natures to assert that the name of an object (i.e., the object's imagined nature) does not constitute its intrinsic characteristic: the object is distinct from its name and devoid of any intrinsic characteristic which that name purports to identify. The object itself, however, exists as a conditioned entity: it exists in terms of its dependent nature, even though it does not exist ultimately.

VI. Conclusion

The comparison between the three natures and Nāgārjuna's writings strongly indicates a continuity between the Madhyamaka and early Yogācāra thought. To argue that the early Yogācāra presentation of the three natures does not run contrary to Nāgārjuna's presentation of universal emptiness, is not to deny that the model of three natures represents a development in Buddhist thought that we can attribute to the early Yogācāra writers. It is crucial to recognize, however, that this development does not necessarily

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prajñaptivādanimittasaṃniśrayaṃ nirabhilāpyātmakatayā paramārthasadbhūtaṃ vastv apavadamāno nāśayati sarveṇa sarvaṃ nāstīti/
(As translated by Willis, p. 160.)

520 Viniścayasaṃgrahaṇī 27b:3-27b:7. PTT vol. 111 (*bstan-'gyur sems-tsam Hi* folio sides 19b-29b) pp. 72-76.

constitute a divergence. The early Yogācāra model of three natures, in complement with Madhyamaka doctrine, is an attempt to explain the human experience of conventional reality and the existence of a religious path connecting that reality to the ultimate realm.

The view of the Madhyamaka and Yogācāra schools as conflicting movements would lead us to expect that their central philosophical doctrines exist in opposition to each other. The arguments I have presented, however, indicate that the early Yogācāra model of three natures is not incompatible with several key elements in Nāgārjuna's thought. In developing the model of three natures, Asaṅga and Vasubandhu brought together and systematized ideas which already existed in Nāgārjuna's philosophy in separate contexts. In addition to the model of two truths, these ideas include the equation of saṃsāra and nirvāṇa, and the equation of dependent co-origination and emptiness. The systematization of these ideas into one coherent scheme is certainly an important contribution by early Yogācāra thinkers. It should not, however, be taken as a repudiation or even a digression from Nāgārjuna's thought.

Chapter 7
Conclusion

I. Summary of the Argument

The goal of this dissertation has been to examine the relation of the early Yogācāra to Nāgārjuna's Madhyamaka. This investigation has been shaped by two central questions. The first question, whether the early Yogācāra writers were actively refuting what they perceived to be a distinct religious school within the Buddhist tradition, is an historical question, and asks where the early Yogācāra writers situated themselves relative to other Buddhist groups and teachings. The second question, whether the philosophical doctrines of the early Yogācāra writers are inconsistent with the foundational Madhyamaka writings, is a question of comparative religious philosophies.

Regarding these two questions, this dissertation has argued toward both a weakly-stated and strongly-stated version of the same two-part thesis. The first part of this thesis addresses the historical question. Its weakly and strongly stated forms, respectively, are as follows: (i) there is no conclusive evidence that the early Yogācāra authors were writing in opposition to the Madhyamaka school, and (I) the early Yogācāra writers were not writing in opposition to the Madhyamaka school. The second half of the thesis addresses the philosophical question regarding the relation between the early Yogācāra and Nāgārjuna's Madhyamaka. Its weakly and strongly stated forms, respectively, are as follows: (ii) the philosophical doctrines which the early Yogācāra authors present can be interpreted as being compatible and

continuous with the writings of Nāgārjuna; and (II) the philosophical doctrines which the early Yogācāra authors present are compatible and continuous with the writings of Nāgārjuna. It has been the aim of this dissertation is to prove the weakly-stated version of the conclusion, and to support as firmly as possible the strongly-stated version.

In addressing the historical question regarding the relation between the early Madhyamaka and Yogācāra schools, I began, in Chapter Two, with an investigation of the identity of the early Yogācāra writers. The relevant available evidence was presented in order to define who the early Yogācāra thinkers were, and when they lived relative to other thinkers in the Madhyamaka and Yogācāra schools. This was necessary so that the different phases of Yogācāra thought, so important for this dissertation, could be given a defendable chronology.

Continuing with the historical question, in Chapters Three and Four I discussed the relation between the early Madhyamaka and Yogācāra schools from a doxographical point of view. In Chapter Three, I considered the ideological depictions of Asaṅga and Vasubandhu that have been handed down within the Buddhist Tradition in the form of traditional biographies: I sought to uncover Buddhist understandings of the history of their tradition, and the role of Asaṅga and Vasubandhu within it. In Chapter Four, I sought to uncover Asaṅga and Vasubandhu's own conceptual map of the Buddhist Tradition and their place within it: to this end, I searched for doxographical indications in the philosophical writings of the early Yogācāra. In both the biographical and philosophical literature, an overwhelming concern with the distinction between the Hīnayāna and the Mahāyāna, and the assertion of the Mahāyāna's authority is apparent. There are no indications, however, that the early Yogācārins were writing in opposition to the works of Nāgārjuna,

or that they even conceived of the Madhyamaka as a distinct group within the Mahāyāna.

In the final two chapters of the dissertation, I investigated the philosophical question regarding the relation between Nāgārjuna's Madhyamaka and the early Yogācāra. In Chapter Five, two central models, the two truths and the three natures, were defined and situated within early Madhyamaka and Yogācāra writings. It was established that the early Yogācāra treatment of the two truths is compatible, and even closely continuous with that of Nāgārjuna. Continuing with an analysis of the philosophical relation between the Madhyamaka and Yogācāra, in Chapter Six, I directly compared the early Yogācāra model of three natures with that of two truths, as well as other elements within Nāgārjuna's thought. The model of three natures represents an important development in Mahāyāna thought. This development, however, does not constitute a break from Nāgārjuna's thought. Rather, the early Yogācāra model of three natures systematizes and complements central ideas in Nāgārjuna's writings.

II. Later Buddhist Views Regarding the Three Natures

Despite the philosophical congruity or complementarity which the modern reader can observe between the model of three natures and Nāgārjuna's thought, there remains the fact that a number of passages in later Madhyamaka writings explicitly reject the three natures. Indeed, the model of three natures is one of the primary targets of Madhyamaka attacks against the Yogācāra. Although a close analysis of these later developments in Madhyamaka thought is beyond the scope of this discussion, it is necessary to address, if only briefly, the Madhyamaka attacks: to locate when and

from whom they were coming, to determine their content, and to assess their implications for our overall understanding of the relation between the Madhyamaka and Yogācāra schools.

One of the most direct and concise attacks upon the model of three natures is located in the Bodhicittavivarana, a text which some sources attribute to Nāgārjuna.[521] The text dismisses the three natures as follows:

> The imagined, the dependent and the absolute have only one nature: emptiness. They are the imaginations of mind.[522]

Without addressing the three natures in any more detail, the subsequent verses proceed to criticize Yogācāra views concerning mind (*citta*) and the storehouse consciousness (*ālayavijñāna*). The fact that the Bodhicittavivarana addresses ideas which only began to be systematized at the time of Asaṅga and Vasubandhu, and that it associates them explicitly with the "Yogācāras," makes it extremely unlikely that Nāgārjuna could be the author of this text: to accept Nāgārjuna as author would belie the almost universally accepted opinion that Nāgārjuna predated Asaṅga and Vasubandhu and the formation of the Yogācāra school.[523] Because of the

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521 For an argument advocating the attribution of this text to Nāgārjuna, see Lindtner (1982) p. 180.

522 Bodhicittavivarana (BV) 28. ed. and trans. Lindtner (1982).
kun brtags dang ni gzhan dbang dang// yoṇs su grub pa 'di nyid ni/ stong nyid bdag nyid gcig pu yi// ngo bo sems la brtags pa pyin/

523 As Kajiyama Yuichi remarks, of all the texts Lindtner ascribes to Nāgārjuna, the BV is the most problematic. (See Kajiyama's review "Nagarjuniana: Studies in the Writings and Philosophy of Nāgārjuna. By Christian Lindtner." EB 2 (1986) p. 124.)

ambiguity regarding its dating, the Bodhicittavivarana is not a reliable source in tracing the history of the conflict between the Madhyamaka and Yogācāra schools.[524]

The earliest clearly datable Madhyamaka critiques of the three natures come from Bhāvaviveka (c. 490-570 CE). Bhāvaviveka's rejection of the three natures, and his general opposition to the Yogācāra school, center upon the problem of defining emptiness, and the question of what it means to be empty of intrinsic nature (*svabhāvaśūnyatā*). In his Jewel in the Hand[525] treatise, Tarkajvālā,[526] and Prajñāpradīpa,[527] Bhāvaviveka presents

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524 There is reason to believe that the BV postdates not only Nāgārjuna, but Bhāvaviveka as well. In trying to prove that the BV was composed by Nāgārjuna, Lindtner cites as evidence the fact that this text constitutes a basic authority for the Ratnapradīpa, which Lindtner attributes to Bhāvaviveka (Lindtner (1982) p. 180).

However, since the Ratnapradīpa contains references to Dharmakīrti and Candrakīrti, it is unlikely that Bhāvaviveka could have been its author. Indeed, these references suggest that the BV was composed significantly later than the time of Bhāvaviveka. (See Ruegg (1982) p. 66)

For a more detailed argument against the attribution of BV to Nāgārjuna, see Williams' review of Lindner's Nagarjuniana in JIP 12 (1984) 73-104.

525 This text exists only in Hsüan-tsang's Chinese translation, the Chang-chen lun (Nanjio 1237, Taisho 1578). The Sanskrit reconstructed title of this text is Karatalaratna (de La Vallée Poussin suggests Tālaratnaśāstra in his article, "L'Auteur du Joyau dans la Main." MCB 2 (1932-1933) p. 61).

Bhāvaviveka's critique of the Yogācāra position runs from 271:2.21 to 273:1.21 (translated by de La Vallée Poussin in Ibid., pp. 93-102.)

526 Bhāvaviveka's Tarkajvāla consists in the systematic presentation and critique of rival schools of thought, both Hindu and Buddhist. He addresses the Yogācāra position in chapter five, entitled "Yogācārattvaviniścaya."

527 Bhāvaviveka's critique of the Yogācāra position is found in Chapter 25 of the Prajñāpradīpa.

For a critical ed. of this chapter, see, Christian Lindtner's "Bhavya's Controversy with Yogācāra in the Appendix to *Prajñāpradīpa*, Chapter XXV" in Tibetan and Buddhist Studies Commemorating the 200th Anniversary of the Birth of Alexander Csoma de Korōs. ed. Louis Ligetti. vol. 2. Buddhapest:

critiques of what he sees as the Yogācārins' reifying view of emptiness. He attacks the notion of the dependent nature in particular. Whereas for the early Yogācāra writers, the dependent nature provides the solution to avoiding both realism and nihilism, according to Bhāvaviveka, the dependent nature is precisely where the Yogācārins fall into the extreme of reification. Bhāvaviveka allows for the existence of the dependent nature, but at the conventional level only. He is against the Yogācārins' purported assertion of its existence at the level of ultimate truth. As Bhāvaviveka asserts:

> Of that which arises from conditions, everyone acknowledges its existence in terms of conventional truth, but if someone maintains that [existence] from the level of ultimate truth, we will refute him with the preceding arguments.[528]

If the Yogācārins assert the existence of the dependent nature at the level of conventional truth, Bhāvaviveka argues, then they are simply asserting what has already been stated before: he presents this as falling into the error of *siddhasādhana* (proving that which has already been established).[529] On the other hand, Bhāvaviveka continues, if they are asserting that the dependent nature exists ultimately, they are falling into the fault of

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Akadémiai Kiadó, 1984, 77-97.

Malcolm David Eckel provides a translation and extensive discussion of this section. See Eckel (1985).

528 Jewel in the Hand 272:2. 26 (p. 99)

529 Jewel in the Hand 272:2.3-272:2.15.

reification.

As with Bhāvaviveka, Candrakīrti's critiques of the Yogācāra focus upon the three natures, and in particular, the dependent nature. In rejecting the dependent nature, Candrakīrti appeals to the authority of the Buddha, claiming that he taught only two, not three truths: "He who knows about the world without having been told by another, taught himself the two truths, the conventional and the ultimate. There is no third truth."[530] Moreover, Candrakīrti presents the Yogācārins' interpretation of the dependent nature as going specifically against the teachings of Nāgārjuna. In his Madhyamakāvatāra (MA), for example, after presenting a philosophical argument against the notion of the dependent nature, Candrakīrti concludes the following about the Yogācārins: "Having left the path of the feet of the master Nāgārjuna, they have no means of peace."[531]

Candrakīrti concedes that the dependent nature and the notion of the existence of the conventional world were taught in Buddhist scriptures, but like Bhāvaviveka, he argues that these teachings should not be interpreted literally. In his commentary to the MA, for example, Candrakīrti points to the teaching of the three natures in the SN, and specifically to the statement that the dependent nature exists. Such passages, Candrakīrti asserts, are of

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530 Madhyamakāvatāra (MA) p. 175.

'jig rten mkhyen pas gzhan la ma gsan par/ bden pa 'di gnyis syid kyis bstan pa mdsad/ gang zhig kun rdsob de bzhin don dam ste/ bden pa gsum pa gang yang ma mchis so/

Citations from the MA are taken from Louis de La Vallée Poussin's edition, Madhyamakāvatāra par Çandrakīrti. Bibliotheca Buddhica vol. 9. Osanbrūk, 1970.

531 MA p. 174.

slob dpon k'u sgrub zhabs kyi lam las ni/ phyi rol gyur la zhi b'i thabs med do/

provisional meaning only.[532] To interpret the statement that the dependent nature exists at a literal level, according to Candrakīrti, simply does not make sense. As he argues earlier in the MA, "If the dependent nature is empty and exists without object (*grāhya*) and without subject (*grāhaka*), then how can its existence be known? It is not enough to say 'It exists without being apprehended.'"[533]

In several places in his Prasannapadā, Candrakīrti provides more detailed philosophical objections to the Yogācāra conception of the dependent nature. In one instance, he presents his objections as part of his commentary to a passage of Nāgārjuna's MMK which warns against the extremes of realism and nihilism. Nāgārjuna asserts:

> "Exists" is the grasping of eternalism, and "Does not exist" is the view of nihilism. The wise should not rely upon [the concepts of] existence and non-existence.
>
> Eternalism means "whatever exists in terms of self-nature, does not become non-existent." Nihilism means "It does not exist now but it formerly existed."[534]

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532 MA p. 195.

533 MA 6:72.

gal te bzung med 'dsin pa nyid bral zhing/ gnyis kyis stong pa'i gzhan dbang dngos yod na/ 'di yi yong par gang gis shes par 'gyur/ ma bzung par yod ces byar mi rung/

534 MMK 15:10-11.

astīti śāśvatagrāho nāsty ucchedadarśanaṃ/ tasmād astivanāstitve nāśrīyeta vicakṣaṇaḥ//

asti yadd hi svabhāvena na tan nāstīti śāśvataṃ/ nāstīdānim abhūt pūrvam ity ucchedaḥ prasajyate//

Candrakīrti elaborates on these verses by presenting what he takes to be the Madhyamaka view on the twin perils of eternalism and nihilism. He then addresses other views which fail to avoid these extremes. One of these views he attributes to the Yogācāra. The Yogācārin, Candrakīrti writes, might say:

> One who deems that mind and mental objects are real only in dependence avoids the theory of eternalism because there is no inherent self-existence in dependence as he conceives it; and he avoids the theory of nihilism because dependent mental states, which are the cause of the removal of afflictions, really exist.[535]

According to Candrakīrti, despite the Yogācārins' claim of treading the Middle Path, their stance does not avoid either extreme. "What is projected by the mind is non-existent," Candrakīrti says, and "what is dependent on mind is existent." Thus the Yogācārins fall into both reification and nihilism. He adds that the Yogācārins also contradict themselves, "since the self-existence of what is dependent does not make sense." Candrakīrti concludes, "Thus the Mādhyamika view alone is free of the twin dogmas of

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535 PP pp. 274-275.

yastu paranantracittacaittavastumātramabhyupetya tasya parikalpitasvabhāvābhāvādastitvadarśanaṃ pariharati/ saṃkleśavyavadānanibandhanasya ca paratantravastumātrasadbhāvānnāstitvadarśanaṃ pariharati/ tasya parikalpitasyāvidyamānatvātparatantrasya ca vidyamānatvādastitvvanāstitvadarśanadvayasyāpyuparipātātkuto'ntdvayaparihā raḥ/ hetupratyayjñanitasya ca sasvabhāvenāyuktatvapratipādanādayuktamevāsya vyākhyānaṃ/ tadevaṃ madhyamakadarṣana evāstitvanāstitvadvayadarśanasyāprasaṇgo na vijñānavādidarśanādiṣviti vijñeyaṃ//

reification and nihilism, but not the views of the Vijñānavādin and others."[536]

Although Candrakīrti accuses the Yogācārins of nihilism as well as realism, his primary contention, like that of Bhāvaviveka, is the latter. According to both Madhyamaka thinkers, the Yogācāra writers assert the existence of objects in a way which contradicts Nāgārjuna's (as well as the Buddha's) teaching of universal emptiness. However, the early Yogācāra teaching of the existence of the dependent nature (*paratantrāstitā*) does not necessarily have to be interpreted in this way, i.e., as an assertion of the independent existence of a realm which is dependent in nature. As Richard King points out, an expression such as *paratantrāstitā* can alternately be interpreted as a "descriptive (but non-ontological) term referring to the interdependent nature of existence."[537] Whereas in the former interpretation Asaṅga and Vasubandhu appear to contradict the Madhyamaka understanding of emptiness, in the latter interpretation, they can be seen as simply presenting an expanded analysis of the Madhyamaka conception of dependent co-origination.

With regard to modern understandings of the relation between the Madhyamaka and Yogācāra schools, the critiques of Bhāvaviveka and Candrakīrti have had far reaching implications. Influenced by Bhāvaviveka

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536 PP p. 275
tadevaṃ madhyamakadarśana evāstitvanāstitvaddvayadarśanasyāprasaṅgo na vijñānavādidarśanādiṣviti vijñeyaṃ//
For a discussion of Candrakīrti's critique of the Yogācāra conception of consciousness, see Peter Fenner's "Candrakīrti's Refutation of Buddhist Idealism." PEW 33:3 (1982) 251-263. See also Robert Olson's "Candrakīrti's Critique of Vijñānavāda." PEW 24:4 (1974) 405-411.

537 King, p. 663.

and Candrakīrti's assessments of Yogācāra thought, modern scholars have tended to depict the Yogācāra school categorically as presenting a more positive interpretation of conventional reality than the Madhyamaka school. More specifically, a number of modern scholars have construed the model of three natures as a corrective for what the early Yogācāra writers saw as Nāgārjuna's overly negativistic treatment of the conventional realm. Stefan Anacker, for example, writes:

> Nāgārjuna posits only two kinds of truth, conventional and ultimate. It is here where Vasubandhu may argue. For a dual truth-scheme perhaps does not make the existence of confusion and suffering "real" enough. Vasubandhu's expedient of dividing reality into three, rather than two, fulfills this purpose.[538]

Janice Dean Willis presents a similar assessment of the relation between the two truths and three natures, and claims that when Asaṅga asserts that there must be a foundation (*āśraya*) for verbal designation, his assertion is "aimed at those 'insiders' (here Nāgārjuna's followers) who misconstrue śūnyatā to mean the complete denial of the relative nature, as well as the imaginary nature."[539] Elsewhere, she describes Asaṅga's position as

> ...more complex than the traditional statement of the Middle Path (for example, as stated by Nāgārjuna) because it is in keeping with Asaṅga's

538 Anacker (1984) p. 194.

539 Willis, p. 112.

> position that the illusory or the unreal nature (i.e., the *parikalpita*) as well as the relative nature (the *paratantra*) must nevertheless be grounded in the real. That is, his formulation allows for an existent, though inexpressible, substratum of reality (which makes cognition, however distorted, and naming possible at all).[540]

Willis, however, is careful not to pinpoint Nāgārjuna himself as the object of Yogācāra critiques. As we can see in the preceding two quotations, her phrasing leaves open the possibility that the early Yogācāra writers were not opposed to Nāgārjuna directly, but to later negativistic interpretations of his teachings, and the teachings of other Mahāyāna texts. While Willis does not state this possibility in so many words, it is precisely this point which I wish to argue.

Although Nāgārjuna's writings clearly allow for an interpretation of emptiness which is more negativistic than that of the early Yogācāra writers, this does not mean that such interpretations are the unique and correct ones, even if they were advocated by later thinkers who explicitly claimed to be the descendants of Nāgārjuna's thought. To argue that the early Yogācāra model of three natures is compatible with the thought of Nāgārjuna is not to argue that Bhāvaviveka and Candrakīrti present incorrect views concerning emptiness, but simply that they and the early Yogācāra writers differ in their interpretations of Nāgārjuna. Rather than seeing the early Yogācāra writers as diverging from Nāgārjuna's thought on the one hand, and Bhāvaviveka and Candrakīrti as upholding it on the other hand, we can see both sides as presenting different interpretations of his work. A number of Buddhist

540 Willis, p. 107.

thinkers contemporaneous with or closely postdating Bhāvaviveka and Candrakīrti have taken precisely this stance.

III. Later Buddhist Views Regarding the Relation Between the Madhyamaka and Yogācāra Schools

Hsüan-tsang, for example, views the early Madhyamaka and Yogācāra writings as compatible, and presents the conflict between them as a development which occurred after the time of Asaṅga and Vasubandhu.[541] Hsüan-tsang attributes this development to the faulty understanding of later Madhyamaka thinkers. A number of times in his Vijñaptimātratāsiddhi, Hsüan-tsang speaks of a certain master who falls into the extreme of over-negation, and in so doing mistakenly attacks the Yogācāra for asserting existence in a way which contradicts the teaching of emptiness. Although Hsüan-tsang does not name the person to whom he is referring, K'uei-chi, Hsüan-tsang's primary disciple, identifies this person as Bhāvaviveka.[542] In his commentary to Hsüan-tsang's Vijñaptimātratāsiddhi, K'uei-chi writes:

> In the nine hundred years after the Buddha's death,

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541 Hsüan-tsang wrote a text emphasizing the harmony between Madhyamaka and Yogācāra thought. Unfortunately, this work no longer exists.

542 See Louis de La Vallée Poussin's Vijñapatimātratāsiddhi: La Siddhi de Hiuan-Tsang. Eight Fascicles. Buddhica: Documents et travaux pou l'étude du Bouddhisme, Première Seire, Tomes I (fasc. 1-4) and V (fasc. 5-8). Paris: Geuthner, 1928-1929, pp. 188, 419, 424, 428, 432, 554-555, 558.

At the same time, K'uei-chi does not reject Bhāvaviveka's interpretation altogether. He concedes that Bhāvaviveka does not completely over-negate in that he acknowledges existence at a conventional level. (See Ibid., p. 4.)

> there was another Bodhisattva named Asaṅga.... During that same time, there was also the Bodhisattva Vasubandhu and other great masters of the treatises.... In the 1100 years, there were Bhāviveka and others. Failing to understand the Prajñāsūtra and other sūtras, as well as the principles and the hidden meaning of the teachings of Nāgārjuna and others, he wrote the treatise Pan-jo-teng (Prajñāpradīpa) and Tchang-tchen (Jewel in the Hand), where he attacked Asaṅga....[543]

K'uei-chi represents the thought of Asaṅga as continuous with Nāgārjuna's work. He even goes further, and attributes Bhāvaviveka's rejection of Asaṅga's work to an incorrect and overly negativistic understanding of Nāgārjuna's writings.

In addition to the question of whether later Mādhyamikas accurately represent the thought of Nāgārjuna, there is the question of whether the Yogācāra views they were critiquing were actually the views of Asaṅga and Vasubandhu. It is known that Bhāvaviveka's attacks against the Yogācāra were part of an ongoing dispute with Dharmapāla. Hsüan-tsang tells us that Bhāvaviveka traveled north in India in order to debate in person with Dharmapāla.[544] In addition to Hsüan-tsang's account, numerous sources closely postdating Hsüan-tsang attest to a great controversy between Bhāvaviveka and Dharmapāla regarding the existence of absolute reality.[545]

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543 My English translation of K'uei-chi is taken from de La Vallée Poussin's French translation of this passage in (1932-1933b) pp. 61-62.

544 According to Hsüan-tsang's account, Dharmapāla refused to see Bhāvaviveka, having retired to Bodhgaya to devote himself to meditation (Beal (1994) pp. 223-224).

545 See de La Vallée Poussin (1932-1933b) pp. 61-65.

Furthermore, this controversy is directly evident in the writings of these two thinkers: for example, Dharmapāla quotes and critiques Bhāvaviveka's Prajñāpradīpa.[546]

The fact that Bhāvaviveka was not arguing with the early Yogācāra writers directly, but with Dharmapāla's interpretation of them is particularly important, given that a number of scholars see Dharmapāla as representing a particular branch of the Yogācāra which in important ways strayed from the earlier writings of Asaṅga and Vasubandhu. Janice Dean Willis, for example, states:

> Assessments which claim to characterize the whole of Yogācāra thought as being uniformly 'idealistic' take little notice of the fact that historically --and according to the texts themselves-- there existed at least two varying streams of Yogācāra thought, viz., (1) what may be called an 'original' thread propounded by Maitreya, Asaṅga, Vasubandhu, and Sthiramati; and (2) a 'later' thread, which found expression notably through such doctors as Dharmapāla and Hsüan-tsang. Both 'streams' were introduced into China --the earlier by Paramārtha and the later by Hsüan-tsang-- and afterwards transmitted also to Japan.[547]

Like Willis, Yoshifumi Ueda points to a "fundamental difference" between

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546 See Kajiyama (1968-9) p. 200.

There is textual evidence that later debates between Candrakīrti and Sthiramati drew from these disputes between Bhāvaviveka and Dharmapāla. We know, for example, that both Candrakīrti and Sthiramati drew directly from Bhāvaviveka's work. Kajiyama points to a particular passage from Bhāvaviveka's Prajñāpradīpa which is quoted by both Sthiramati and Candrakīrti. (Ibid., pp. 198-199).

547 Willis, p. 21.

the stream of Yogācāra thought which was introduced into China by Paramārtha, and that which was introduced by Hsüan-tsang through Dharmapāla.[548] Even further, Ueda declares that Dharmapāla is not faithful to the original meaning of the early Yogācāra texts, whereas Sthiramati and Paramārtha are.[549]

The contention that Dharmapāla diverged from the teachings of Asaṅga and Vasubandhu, and in so doing fell into conflict with the Madhyamaka school, is expressed by Fa-tsang (643-712 CE), a student of Śīlabhadra and Jñānaprabha's *chiao-p'an* (classification of Buddhist teachings), and the systematizer of the Chinese Buddhist Hua-yen school. The development of the conflict between the Madhyamaka and Yogācāra, he says, arose after the time of Asaṅga and Vasubandhu, and took place among men of "limited intelligence." Fa-tsang goes so far as to identify the culprits, and to specify the faults of which they were guilty: he accuses Bhāvaviveka of over-negating, and Dharmapāla of falling into the fault of reification. While Bhāvaviveka "destroyed the existence of emptiness," he says, Dharmapāla "destroyed the emptiness of existence." These thinkers,

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548 Ueda, pp. 160, 165. See also Isshi Yamada "Vijñaptimātratā of Vasubandhu." JRAS 2 (1977).

549 Yuichi Kajiyama identifies the main difference in these two streams of thought as their theories of knowledge. Dharmapāla, and those who followed him, ascribed to Dignāga's *sākāravāda*, in which it is held that knowledge of an object is endowed with the image of that object. In this theory, the images of cognition are believed to belong to the dependent nature. Paramārtha's stream of the Yogācāra, on the other hand, ascribes to *nirākāravāda*, in which it is held that knowledge is not endowed with the image of its object. In this theory, the images of cognition belong to the imagined nature. Kajiyama, like Ueda, sees Paramārtha's stream of Yogācāra (the *nirākāravāda*) as more faithful to Asaṅga's writings. (See Kajiyama's "Controversy between the Sākāra-and Nirākāra-vādins of the Yogācāra School-- Some Materials" JIBS 14:1 (1965) 26-37).

Fa-tsang concludes, "did not understand the intention, but rather stuck to the literal meaning" of the earlier Mahāyāna writings.[550]

As for the early Yogācāra writings and those of Nāgārjuna, Fa-tsang sees them as distinct, yet compatible. He states:

> The theory of Nāgārjuna shows that existence is not different from emptiness: the discourse of Asaṅga shows that emptiness is not different from existence. These two men are in agreement, and, if not explicitly, implicitly are united. There is no rudimentary conflict, and Asaṅga regards Nāgārjuna as master.[551]

Fa-tsang's assessment mirrors that of his contemporary Wonch'uk, who, as we saw above, asserted that during the time of Asaṅga and Vasubandhu, "...there was no controversy over *śūnyatā* and *bhāva*."[552]

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550 From Fa-tsang's commentary on the Laṅkāvatāra, Taisho 1790, p. 430, 3, 7-24. Trans. de La Vallée Poussin (1932-1933b) p. 64.

551 Idem.

552 As we saw in Chap. 4, Sect. 5, Wonch'uk depicts the conflict between Madhyamaka and Yogācāra thinkers as a development which occurred after the time of Asaṅga and Vasubandhu. Wonch'uk's own scholastic affiliations may have some bearing on his view regarding the compatibility between the Madhyamaka and Yogācāra schools. Wonch'uk was initially a disciple of Hsüan-tsang's school of Yogācāra, which followed the interpretation of Dharmapāla. However, he was also well versed in the tradition transmitted to China by Paramārtha. He was eventually expelled from Hsüan-tsang's school, and became disaffected from this stream of Yogācāra thought. There may be some connection between Wongch'uk's disagreements with the Dharmapālan stream of Yogācāra and his contention that the early Yogācāra writings were compatible with those of Nāgārjuna.

For a synopsis of Wonch'uk's life, see Gadjin Nagao's Book Review, "S. Inaba's Restoration of Yüan-ts'e's Chieh-shen-mi-ching-shu through its Tibetan Counterpart" (in Japanese) quoted in and translated in Hirabayashi and Iida (1977) p. 346.

See also Shotaro Iida's "A Mukung-hwa in Ch'ang-an --A Study of the Life

In addition to the assertions of the continuity of Madhyamaka and Yogācāra thought by Hsüan-tsang, K'uei-chi, Wonch'uk and Fa-tsang, the Tibetan canon, in terms of its organization and attribution of texts, gives indications of the compatibility of the writings of the two schools. Of the five works which are attributed to Maitreya in the Tibetan tradition, two are classified as Madhyamaka texts: the Abhisamayālamkāra and the Uttaratantra.[553] With regard to the three natures specifically, the Tibetan compilers of the Buddhist canon appear to have seen a strong continuity with the work of Nāgārjuna. This is evidenced by the fact that they have attributed works containing expositions of the three natures to Nāgārjuna. The Tibetan canon contains two translations of the TSN. One, it assigns to Vasubandhu, and places in the Cittamātra (*Sems-tsam*) section; the other, translated by Zla-ba grags pa, it attributes to Nāgārjuna, and places in the Madhyamaka (*Dbu-ma*) section of the canon. In addition, the Tibetan canon attributes the Svabhāvatrayapraveśasiddhi, which discusses the three natures in a manner very similar to Vasubandhu's TSN, to Nāgārjuna. Granted these attributions are most likely faulty, and in any case are not sufficient evidence to establish the compatibility of the model of three natures with Nāgārjuna's thought, they are further indications that the three natures were not

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and Works of Wonch'uk (613-696), with special interest in the Korean contributions to the development of Chinese and Tibetan Buddhism." Proceedings, International Symposium, Commemorating the 30th Anniversary of Korean Liberation, National Academy of Sciences, Republic of Korea, 1975, pp. 225-51.

553 This classification is put forth and defended in the gSung lan Ku grub dgongs rgyan, p. 19ff by Se ra rJe bstun Chos kyi rgyal mtshan. (See José Cabezón's A Dose of Emptiness: An Annotated Translation of the *sTong thun chen mo* of mKhas grub dGe legs dpal bzang. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992, p. 421.)

universally regarded by later Buddhist thinkers as incompatible with Nāgārjuna's writings.

In the Chinese Buddhist canon as well, there are strong carryovers between the textual corpus of the Madhyamaka and Yogācāra. It attributes to Asaṅga a commentary on Nāgārjuna's MMK, the Shung-chung-lun.[554] This text, available only in its Chinese translation, examines the Mahāprajñāpāramitā-sūtra with reference to the MMK. The author of this text is clearly in agreement with Nāgārjuna, quoting and supporting his interpretation of the Mahāprajñāpāramitā-sūtra. Whether or not we accept the Shung-chung-lun as an authentic text of Asaṅga, it is clear, at minimum, that the compilers of the Chinese Buddhist canon regarded it as possible that Asaṅga's writings would express congruity with the works of Nāgārjuna.[555]

IV. Possible Explanations for the Arising of the Dispute Between the Later Madhyamaka and Yogācāra

The evidence from the Tibetan and Chinese Buddhist canons, together with the reports of Hsüan-tsang, K'uei-chi, Fa-tsang, Wonch'uk, and Tāranātha, seem to support the strongly stated argument of this dissertation, namely, that the early Yogācāra writers were not writing in opposition to the Madhyamaka school, and that the philosophical doctrines which the early Yogācāra authors present are compatible and continuous with the writings of

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554 T. 1565. The Shung-chung-lun was translated into Chinese in 543 CE.

555 John Keenan argues that the Shung-chung-lun is indeed by Asaṅga, and supports the view of an organic relationship between the Madhyamaka and Yogācāra schools (Keenan, John P. "Asaṅga's Understanding of Mādhyamika: Notes on the *Shung-chung-lun*." JIABS 12:1 (1989) 93-107).

Nāgārjuna. If we are to accept this position, it becomes necessary to address the question as to how and why the conflict between the Madhyamaka and Yogācāra schools eventually did arise. Although a close examination of this question is beyond the scope of this dissertation, I will suggest some possible answers which future studies might consider.

The emergence of a rift between Madhyamaka and Yogācāra thinkers occurred in the sixth century among Indian scholastic monks, especially Bhāvaviveka and Dharmapāla. This period in Mahāyāna thought corresponds with what I have defined in the first chapter as the late Yogācāra. While it was possible before this time to have read the early Yogācāra writings as incompatible with those of Nāgārjuna, there is no evidence that anyone had done so. There are certain external circumstances during this phase of Mahāyāna Buddhism that may well have contributed toward the development of divergent interpretations of early Madhyamaka and Yogācāra writings. At this time, there seems to have been an increased focus within the Buddhist fold upon scholastic centers. In the second half of the fifth century, the Buddhist university of Nālandā had begun to receive patronage from Gupta rulers, and by the sixth century, it was at its height in terms of reputation and influence.[556] Within the academic community of Nālandā, where Dharmapāla served as abbot, an atmosphere of scholastic

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556 Hsüan-tsang and I-tsing record that King Śakrāditya (Kumāragupta I) first officially recognized Nālandā as a university and provided *saṃghārāmas* for lodging students (Beal, vol. 2, p. 168; I-tsing, p. 46).

Hirananda Sastri, "Nālandā and its Epigraphic Material." Memoirs of the Archeological Survey of India no. 66, 1942, p. 19.

Mary L. Stewart "Nālandā Mahāvihāra: A Study of an Indian Pāla Period Buddhist Site and British Historical Archaeology, 1861-1939." BAR International Series no. 529, 1989, pp. 12, 71.

Hasmukh D. Sankalia. The University of Nālandā. Madras: B.G. Paul and Co. Publishers, 1934, p. 44-54.

rivalry developed.[557] The proclivity for debate was perhaps fueled by competition for academic positions within the university.[558]

Whether or not it was fueled specifically by competition, this clearly was a period in Buddhist history which abounded in intense scholastic debate. Not only was there a rift between the Madhyamaka and Yogācāra schools, but a rift within the Madhyamaka school itself.[559] Thus, Bhāvaviveka, while arguing against the Yogācāra, was also disputing the views of certain Mādhyamikas as well. The disputatious climate of the time is embodied in the literary style which Bhāvaviveka is credited with having developed. This style, which became known as *siddhānta*, consists of a format in which consecutive chapters of a philosophical text present and critique the views of rival Buddhist and Hindu schools.

While we can point to sixth century India for the beginnings of a

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557 Tradition tells us that Bhāvaviveka was abbot of about fifty monasteries in South India, in the region of Dhānyakaṭa (See, for example, Chattopadhyaya, p. 186).

558 As I have mentioned in Chap. 1, Sect. 4, Stefan Anacker remarks that the sixth century Indian Buddhist scholars, "... may have disagreed because they were academics fighting for posts and recognition" (Anacker (1984) p. 3).

559 Regarding the debate between the Prāsaṅgika and Svātantrika streams of the Madhyamaka, see:

Yuichi Kajiyama's "Bhāvaviveka and the Prāsaṅgika School." Nava-Nālandā-Mahāvihāra Research Publication 1, 289-331;

Nathan Katz's "An Appraisal of the Svātantrika-Prāsaṅgika Debates." PEW 26 (1976) 253-267;

Peter Della Santina's, "The Division of the Mādhyamika System into the Prāsaṅgika and Svātantrika Schools." Journal of Religious Studies 7 (1979) 40-49; and Madhyamaka Schools in India: A Study of the Madhyamaka Philosophy and of the Division of the System into the Prāsaṅgika and Svātantrika Schools. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1986.

Ichimura Shohei's "A New Approach to the Intra-Mādhyamika Confrontation over the Svātantrika and Prāsaṅgika Methods of Refutation." JIABS 5 (1982) 41-52.

conflict between Madhyamaka and Yogācāra thinkers, the formalization of this conflict, i.e., the delineation between two distinct schools within the Mahāyāna, and the characterization of these two schools as categorically opposed, may be due to the way in which Buddhism was transmitted and preserved in Tibet and China. Ian Harris argues that the notion of Buddhist schools, and the differentiation of the Mahāyāna into the Madhyamaka and Yogācāra schools "took place shortly before, and probably during, the transmission of the tradition to Tibet." According to Harris, the Buddhist tradition was transmitted into Tibet by Indian teachers who had been brought up in particular lineages, each of which had its particular methods of interpretation based different terminology. Those who were unfamiliar with Buddhism, he says, confused these differences with sectarian differences. According to Harris, this attitude was passed on and formalized by later systematizers and "pseudo-historians" in Tibet such as Bu-ston.[560]

The particularities in the way in which Buddhism was transported to China also may have contributed to the formalization of the conflict between the Madhyamaka and Yogācāra. As we have discussed above, Yogācāra thought was introduced to China in two distinct streams: Paramārtha's interpretation of the early Yogācāra, which was brought over by Paramārtha himself, and Dharmapāla's interpretation of early Yogācāra, which was brought over by Hsüan-tsang. Although Paramārtha's interpretation represents more closely the thought of the early Yogācāra, it was soon overshadowed in China by that of Dharmapāla. In taking Dharmapāla's thought as representative of the Yogācāra school as a whole, Chinese Buddhists may have been strongly inclined to view the Yogācāra as

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560 Harris, pp. 75-77.

incompatible with the Madhyamaka.

V. Suggestions for Future Studies

In addition to raising these important questions regarding developments in late Yogācāra thought, this dissertation also brings to light important questions regarding the pre-Yogācāra and early Yogācāra phases. In Chapter Four, the search for doxographical indications in early Yogācāra writings revealed a preeminent concern with the relation between the Hīnayāna and the Mahāyāna. This suggests that instead of focusing on the early Yogācāra as a response to Madhyamaka, we take seriously the fact the early Yogācāra writers themselves seem to have been far more concerned with their relation to the Hīnayāna. The recognition of this concern, in turn, calls for a close study of the early Yogācāra in terms of its emergence from and reaction against the Hīnayāna.

The relation of the Yogācāra to the Hīnayāna has been addressed by scholars such as Paul Griffiths and Lambert Schmithausen. Griffiths argues that the Yogācāra concept of *ālayavijñāna* was an "ad hoc intellectual construct" which was developed in response to problems raised regarding the continuity of individual identity by Vaibhāṣika thinkers.[561] Griffiths also points out that in developing the notion of *ālayavijñāna*, Yogācāra thinkers drew from Sautrāntika views of consciousness. Schmithausen concurs with Griffiths in observing a close relation between the Yogācāra and Sautrāntika schools.[562] Although Griffiths and Schmithausen observe

561 Griffiths (1986) p. 96.

562 Schmithausen, however, disagrees with Griffiths regarding the origin and development of the concept of *ālayavijñāna*.

doctrinal similarities between Sautrāntika and Yogācāra thought, the general relation between these two schools, or between the Yogācāra and Hīnayāna more generally, is not an issue they investigate. Instead, they focus their studies on a separate topic within Yogācāra thought --Griffiths addresses its theoretical development, and Schmithausen addresses its textual history.

Further studies may examine the doctrinal similarities between early Yogācāra and Sautrāntika writings alongside early Yogācāra writers' own explicit statements regarding their relation to the Hīnayāna, as well as Buddhist accounts of Asaṅga and Vasubandhu's initial affiliation, and eventual break from the Hīnayāna. Of particular significance here are the accounts of Vasubandhu's composition of the Abhidharmakośa, which represents Vaibhāṣika views, his later refutation of these views in favor of the Sautrāntika perspective, and then his eventual conversion to the Mahāyāna. A close analysis which combines both the historical and philosophical materials which are pertinent to the early Yogācāra and its relation to the Hīnayāna, in addition to contributing to our knowledge of the Yogācāra, may also tell us something more generally about the arising of the Mahāyāna. Such studies also may help to resolve the important question of whether there are one or two Vasubandhus.

In more general terms, this study has called for a careful consideration of the distinction between historical and philosophical questions regarding religious schools, and the textual materials we use to address these questions. It has brought together philosophical and biographical writings by treating them as documents within the history of ideas, and has attempted

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Other scholars who have examined the philosophical continuities between Sautrāntika and early Yogācāra thought are Stefan Anacker (1972) and Étienne Lamotte (1988).

to show how a close reading of philosophical literature can inform our view of Buddhist history. Furthermore, it has called for a careful consideration of the use of "schools" as a category of analysis. Although this study by no means seeks to deconstruct or reject this category, it asks us to recognize the dangers in using the notion of schools, if we are to take them to denote separate, unified traditions that exist as distinct and unchanging entities. This study has worked toward an understanding of schools which recognizes, first, their own internal development, and second, their mutual drawing from a shared body of tradition. Such an understanding takes into consideration the existence of a continuum both within and between schools of thought in which foundational doctrines are given varying emphases and different shades of interpretation.

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